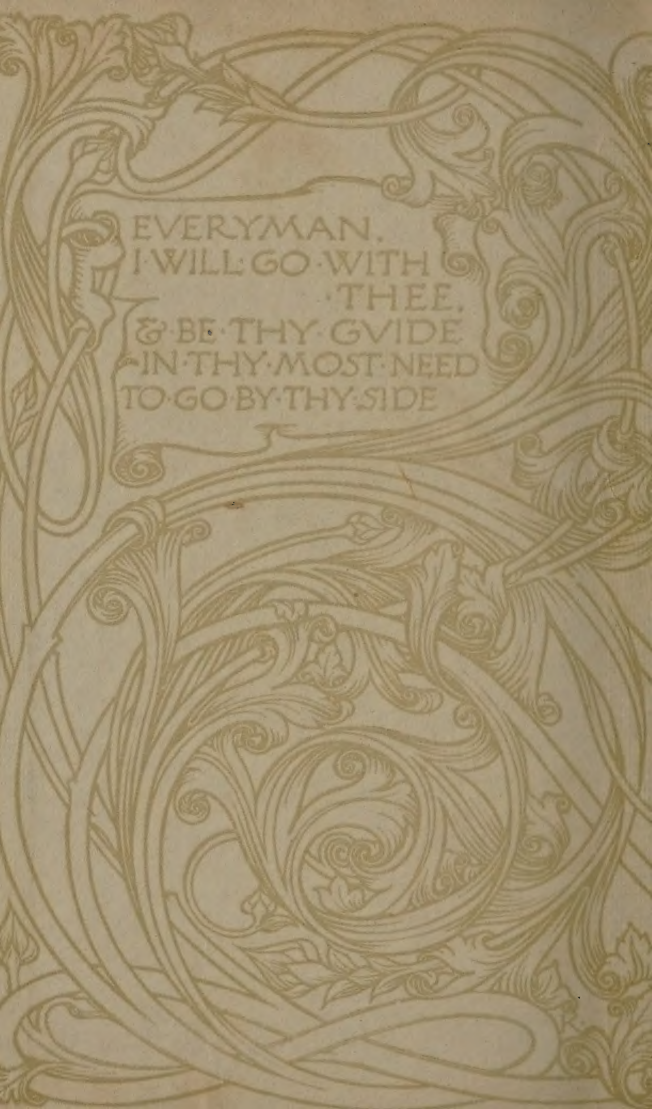
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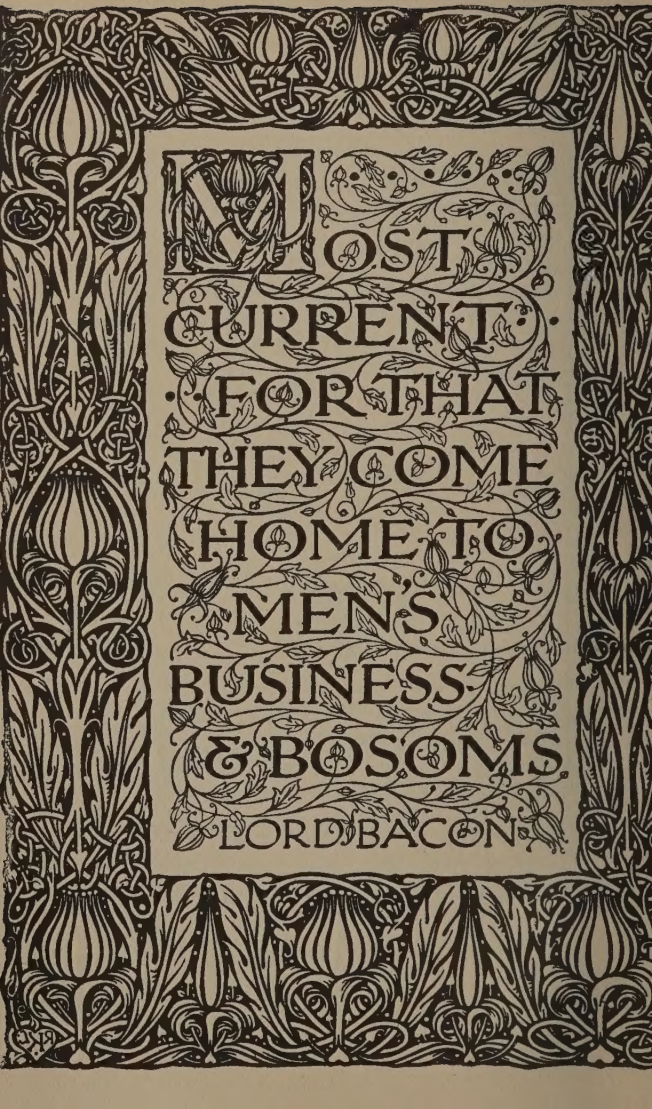
MOST CURRENT FOR THAT THEY COME HOME TO MEN'S BUSINESS & BOSOMS
LORD BACON

A GALLERY of LITERARY PORTRAITS by GEORGE GILFILLAN

EVERY MAN I WILL GO WITH THEE BE THY GVIDE

IN THY MOST NEED TO GO BY THY SIDE

LONDON: PUBLISHED by J. M. DENT & CO AND IN NEW YORK BY E. P. DUTTON & CO

INTRODUCTION

For about five years (1849-1854) George Gilfillan's position as a critic was one of very great influence. It may be doubted whether even Carlyle had more power over young minds. These years were the period of a movement. There was a thrill in the air, a belief that the new world was at hand. This was felt beyond his immediate circle; it stirred in the books of the Brontës, the socialism of Kingsley, and the passionate preaching of Kossuth and Mazzini. Of course it appealed chiefly to young minds.

> Still are they equal—fit for weeping or for laughter.
> The flight they still admire; the flash with pleasure see.

There was something, perhaps much of fever in it, but it helped Gilfillan to break into the depths of his genius. Almost every literary aspirant in the country sent his manuscripts to the Dundee critic; wherever he went to lecture or preach he was followed by admiring crowds. Such moods cannot last; their tension was manifest in Kingsley with his steady "ambition to die," and in Gilfillan and Dobell with their anticipation of the speedy return of Christ. Aytoun's *Firmilian: a Spasmodic Tragedy* was the literary death-blow to the movement, but even if that brilliant satire had never been written, the movement would have gone the way of dreams. It ended as a matter of fact with Thackerayism in literature and with Palmerstonianism in politics. Mr. Gilfillan went on writing till the last, and he never wrote better than in the closing years of his life; but his empire was over. Since his death his books have been almost forgotten, and he is not so much as named by Professor Saintsbury in his *History of Criticism*. Still he can never be ignored in any full record of Victorian literature.

George Gilfillan was the son of a Secession minister at Comrie, where he was born in 1813. When he was thirteen years old his father died, and he entered Glasgow College, where he became a class fellow of Archibald Campbell Tait, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. Among his professors were Sir Daniel Sandford, Robert Buchanan, and James

Milne. At that time the Glasgow students elected Thomas Campbell the poet to the office of Lord Rector, and Gilfillan always remembered with delight the day when Campbell came to be installed, and to deliver his inaugural address. Gilfillan did not distinguish himself as a student, but he attracted attention as an essayist. When he read a paper on the "Association of Ideas" in Buchanan's class room, the first words of the professor's criticism were: "We have got a young Chalmers among us." His mind was intensely active, and he read very widely. The first man to influence him was Christopher North, and he never was free from that spell. His desire was to be a literary man, but he proceeded to study for the ministry in the Theological Hall of his church. This took him to Edinburgh, where he came in contact more or less with many eminent men, including Wilson, Chalmers, and Jeffrey. From Wilson he received some indirect encouragement, and his interest in poetry was greatly stimulated. In 1836, when he was only twenty-four, he was appointed minister of the School Wynd Congregation, Dundee, with a stipend of £220 a year, and a manse. A year later he was married to Margaret Valentine. He threw himself into preaching, and his bold and unconventional style attracted large congregations, though he was by no means without his troubles. He continued to be minister in the same sphere till his life closed in 1878, and his power and his eccentricity kept round him many admirers, and made him perhaps the most outstanding figure in Dundee. It was through Thomas Aird, the poet, that he found opportunity for literary work. In 1837 Aird visited Dundee to attend the funeral of a brother who had been a member of Gilfillan's church, and then their friendship began. Aird's poem, "The Devil's Dream," is still remembered, and he was a close friend of Thomas Carlyle and of Christopher North. He wrote much in *Blackwood*, and was editor of the *Dumfriesshire and Galloway Herald*. Aird, though he was not in a position to pay Gilfillan for his contributions, allowed him to write in his paper the literary sketches afterwards published as *A Gallery of Literary Portraits*. He began in 1840. The articles, though printed in a provincial paper, attracted considerable attention. The first portrait in this volume was read by Carlyle, who thought it was written by Aird. Carlyle wrote to Aird: "It is a noble panegyric—a picture painted by a poet, which means with me a man of insight and of heart; decisive, sharp of outline,

in hues borrowed from the sun. It is rare to find oneself so mirrored in a brother's soul." Writing in January 1844 to Emerson, Carlyle said: "Did you receive a Dumfries newspaper with a criticism (of me) in it? The author is one Gilfillan, a young Dissenting minister in Dundee, a person of great talent, ingenuousness, enthusiasm and other virtues; whose position as a preacher of bare old Calvinism under penalty of death sometimes makes me tremble for him. He has written in that same newspaper about all the notablest men of his time: Godwin, Corn-Law Elliott, and I know not all whom; if he publish the book I will take care to send it you. I saw the man for the first time last autumn at Dumfries. As I said, his being a Calvinist Dissenting minister economically fixed and spiritually with such germinations in him, forces me to be very reserved with him." But the two men met both in Dumfries and in London, and had much friendly intercourse. Carlyle, with characteristic kindness, endeavoured to help on his book. He wrote in November 1840 to Lockhart, then editor of the *Quarterly*: "A poor meritorious Scotchman, a burgher minister in Dundee, of the name of Gilfillan, has published a book—I believe at his own expense too, poor fellow—under the title *Gallery of Literary Portraits* or some such thing; and is about sending, as in duty bound, a copy to the *Quarterly*. I know not whether this poor book will in the least lie in your way; but to prevent you throwing it aside without so much as looking at it, I write now to bear witness that the man is really a person of superior parts; and that his book, of which I have read some of the sections, first published in a country newspaper that comes to me, is worthy of being looked at a little by you,—that you may decide then, with cause shown, whether there is anything to be done with it. I am afraid not very much. A strange, oriental, Scriptural style; full of fervour, and crude, gloomy fire,—a kind of opium style. However, you must look a little, and say.

"This testimony I have volunteered to send, having seen the man as well as his writing; and now this is all I have to say. The antecedents to this step, and the corollaries that follow from it on your part and on mine are not needed to be written. I believe you will do me the honour (a very great honour as times go) to believe what I have written; and the helping of a poor fellow that has merit, when he can be helped —this, I take it, is at all times felt to be a pleasure and a

blessing by you as by me. And so enough of it." Lockhart does not seem to have taken any notice of this appeal, but when the *Gallery of Literary Portraits* was published Gilfillan did not want for friends. The book had a hearty reception both in this country and in America. It was published by William Tait, the proprietor of *Tait's Magazine*. *Tait* was the Radical rival to the Conservative *Blackwood*. Though by no means on the literary level of *Blackwood*, it had a proportion of good articles, including many contributions from Thomas De Quincey. The first *Gallery of Literary Portraits* had the high distinction of being reviewed elaborately by De Quincey in papers that are to be found in his collected works. Gilfillan became a frequent contributor to *Tait*, and he found an outlet also in a popular and meritorious Edinburgh magazine of the time which bore the singular title of *Hogg's Instructor*. His writings were acceptable among the English Nonconformists, and he contributed to their leading periodicals, the *British Quarterly Review*, edited by Dr. Robert Vaughan, and the *Eclectic Review*, edited by Dr. Thomas Price. He was invited immediately to lecture at the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution, in London, and in many places throughout the country. To a very large class the combination of literary with religious interests was very attractive. Sydney Dobell wrote: "Here is an orthodox divine who proclaims that 'a powerful cause of our recent refined scepticism may be found in the narrow, bigoted, and unworthy notions of Christianity which prevail, in the obstinacy with which they are retained, and in the contrast thus presented to the liberal and fluent motion of the general age.' . . . Here is a philosopher, the friend of Carlyle, the panegyrist of Emerson, sitting and in his right mind at the feet of Christ. Here is a man burning in zeal, adamantine in faith, but who steps out to spiritual combat with the difficulties of the day, crying, 'It will not do now to skulk from the field under a flight of nicknames. It will not do to call our opponents miscreants and monsters. While we state their doubts, let us pity the pain and sorrow, amounting almost to distraction and despair, which attend them; and let us inquire, if we have no difficulties, may it not be because we have never thought at all?'"

Gilfillan found close friends among some of the most brilliant men of the day. David Scott, the painter, was one; Samuel Brown, the famous chemist, was another, and a third was Professor J. P. Nichol of Glasgow, the father of the late

Professor John Nichol. Another friend was Emerson, who visited him in Dundee. Longfellow was also a frequent and cordial correspondent.

But perhaps the most substantial recognition was that which Gilfillan received from young men with literary ambitions. They sent him their manuscripts and their books. Generous and warm-hearted to a degree, Gilfillan took endless troubles for his young admirers. He criticised; he praised when he could; he found publishers in many cases; and he was so lavish in the gifts he bestowed out of his small means that his wife had practically to deprive him of money. Two at least of the associations thus formed deserve to be somewhat fully described. I refer to his "discovery" of Sydney Dobell and Alexander Smith.

The biographer of Sydney Dobell says: "An extract from the 'Roman' published in *Tait's Magazine* had excited a good deal of attention, and was probably the first motive of a correspondence between its author and the Rev. George Gilfillan." I have reason, however, to believe that it was through Mr. Gilfillan that the extract from Dobell's manuscript poem was printed in *Tait*. Dobell wrote to him under date May 3, 1849: "I am not ashamed to tell you that your words have given me great happiness—whoso has been in great doubt can fancy how lively—and it is due to that free philanthropy which has thrown such largess to an importunate stranger, to say that happiness is, I believe and trust, the poorest part of the alms. If in after years I should ever be called 'Poet' you will know that my success is, in some sort, your work. And in that knowledge I feel that such a nature as yours will be best thanked." When the first edition of the *Roman* was published by Mr. Bentley at the beginning of April 1850, it was received with universal commendation. Gilfillan sounded its praises wherever he went, and Dobell was not lacking in appreciation of his friend. In a short-lived Edinburgh magazine, the *Palladium*, edited by a Congregational minister, the Rev. Ninian Wight, Dobell wrote articles on Gilfillan's *Galleries of Literary Portraits*, and on his *Bards of the Bible*. It was to the same periodical that Dobell contributed his magnificent panegyric of *Wuthering Heights*, and he may be said to have been the first writer who truly appreciated the genius of Emily Brontë, though he believed that the books of Emily and Charlotte came from the same hand. In subsequent letters Dobell refers cordiall

to Gilfillan. Writing in 1850 to Dr. Samuel Brown he says: "Our noble friend Gilfillan has spoken with much tender anxiety of you." Gilfillan introduced Dobell to Carlyle, and at Carlyle's request the articles written by Dobell on Currer Bell, on Newman, and on the *Bards of the Bible* were sent to him. Carlyle wrote: "I have read your three articles in the prescribed order with a real pleasure and interest: it is by no means every day one sees such a busy, swift, sharp cutting brain and such an ardent, hoping heart pouring themselves forth in the way of literature as are manifest here." In 1854 Dobell writes: "Gilfillan, who disappointed us on Friday, made his appearance last Tuesday morning, and spent the day with us. He seems to me the very incarnation of force: not power but force." It was in 1854 that Dobell published *Balder*, and the book was on the whole most unfavourably received. As Dobell's biographer says, nothing could have been in greater contrast to the enthusiastic reception given to the *Roman*. Dobell had himself a whole-hearted belief in its quality and in its future. It was his deliberate judgment that there was as much poetry in many a chapter of *Balder* as in the whole of the *Roman*. But while assuredly there are many fine things in *Balder*, it is now practically forgotten. Gilfillan at first praised it, but afterwards recanted and spoke of it as "that hideous spasm of a true poet." Though the intercourse between Gilfillan and Dobell does not seem to have been prolonged much beyond 1855, there remained a very friendly feeling between them.

Alexander Smith had a far more sudden and startling success than ever fell to Sydney Dobell. It may be worth while setting down the facts of the connection between him and Gilfillan with fulness and accuracy, as they are often mis-stated. In that excellent and modest book, *The Early Years of Alexander Smith*, by the Rev. T. Brisbane, published in 1869, most of the particulars will be found. Mr. Brisbane says that before Smith sent his manuscripts to Gilfillan he had been for several years an ardent admirer of the critic. "Everything from the pen of that gifted minister of Dundee was hailed and diligently perused by him; and on every occasion of his visiting Glasgow as a preacher or lecturer Smith was certain to be one of his hearers. No man in Scotland wielded at that time so great an influence over young aspiring minds intent on self-culture as Mr. Gilfillan; and among others Smith was attracted to him by his hearty,

impartial appreciation of genius, and the bold utterance of his convictions. By his writings in *Hogg's Instructor*, the *Eclectic*, the *Critic*, etc., Smith's mind was in no slight degree stimulated. Several of his early friends remember him speaking frequently of two articles especially from Gilfillan's pen, which appeared in *Hogg's Instructor* in July 1845, on 'Genius,' as containing sentences which greatly quickened his latent faculties, and, to use his own words, 'haunted my mind for months.' Hence, at length, emboldened by Mr. Gilfillan's commendations of the *Roman* by Sydney Yendys or Dobell, Smith, after consultation with two of his young friends of the Addisonian Society, resolved to submit a selection of his poems to him whom he had so long admired, and from whose writings he had derived so much benefit. Consequently in April 1851, he sent a small parcel of MS. accompanied by a modest letter, soliciting criticism and advice, to Dundee." After some time Gilfillan sent back a letter so appreciative, encouraging, and eulogistic that Smith was filled with unwonted joy, and stirred to greater activity. In October 1851 Gilfillan wrote a notice of Smith's manuscript poems in the *Eclectic Review*. Immediately after Gilfillan happened to be preaching in Glasgow and met Smith for the first time. He introduced Smith to Professor Nichol and to the professor's son, Mr. John Nichol, then a student, and afterwards Professor of English Literature in the University of Glasgow. Dr. Nichol remained to his death an ardent and steadfast friend.

But the real introduction of Smith took place in 1852. At that time Mr. Edward W. Cox, who attained so marked a success in other fields of journalism, was endeavouring to establish a literary paper called the *Critic*. It was published fortnightly and contained contributions from such men as W. M. Rossetti, William Maccall, and Gilfillan. Francis Espinasse, who is happily still with us, was the life and soul of the paper. It had considerable vigour, but was too irregular and too much made up of extracts to be a serious rival to the *Athenæum*. However, at that time it had a good circulation, and when Gilfillan published a long article on "A New Poet in Glasgow" in which he not only gave copious extracts from several of the manuscripts before him but published some of the poems entire, there was something like a sensation. Mr. Gilfillan accounted for his reviewing poems of a living writer which were still only in manuscript

by saying: "His aim is at present partly to get his poetry printed, but principally to work up his way to a situation more congenial to his mind, more worthy of his powers, and allowing him more leisure for his favourite pursuits." He called "specially on Glasgow friends, ever generous and warm-hearted, to look to it that they neglect not one of the finest poets—perhaps indeed, one promising to be the finest since Campbell—their good city had produced." This brought friends round Smith, and he soon found a publisher in Mr. David Bogue. It ought to be noted that when Gilfillan wrote, heralding a new poet, he had never seen or heard of *A Life Drama*, and could not consequently write about *it*. What Smith sent him was a collection of short poems. Smith resolved to fuse the poems into one by detaching, transposing, piecing, uniting, and supplementing. Mr. Gilfillan expressed doubts as to the feasibility of the plan, but when *A Life Drama* appeared at the close of the year 1852 it had a remarkable reception. Smith immediately became famous. George Meredith wrote a sonnet to Smith in the *Critic*, and nearly all the reviewers were enthusiastic in their praise. Smith obtained the appointment of secretary to the University of Edinburgh, and he never ceased to own his obligations to the man who had helped him into fame.

But the reaction came which greatly and permanently injured George Gilfillan's reputation and influence. It can hardly be doubted that the reaction was largely due to the publication of *Balder*. No doubt reaction was inevitable, but *Balder*, it must be confessed, offered a tempting target. W. E. Aytoun in *Firmilian* inflicted an almost deadly blow on what he called the "Spasmodic School." The name stuck, and the event was remembered. *Firmilian* was partly published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, and appeared in book form under the title *Firmilian, or the Student of Badajoz: a Spasmodic Tragedy*, by T. Percy Jones. It can only be understood by those familiar with the writings of the school. But a specimen may be given of the "Spasms":—

> Let the hoarse thunder rend the vault of heaven,
> Yea, shake stars by myriads from their boughs,
> As autumn tempests shake the fruitage down;—
> Let the red lightning shoot athwart the sky,
> Entangling comets by their spooming hair,
> Piercing the zodiac belt, and carrying dread
> To old Orion, and his whispering hound;—
> But let the glory of this deed be mine!

Gilfillan, who was introduced under his pseudonym "Apollodorus," was treated with special cruelty:—

> Why do men call me a presumptuous cur,
> A vapouring blockhead, and a turgid fool,
> A common nuisance and a charlatan?

The effect was immediate and marked. Sydney Dobell wrote *Keith of Ravelston*, the lyric by which he is remembered; Alexander Smith, through the rest of his short life, wrote much good poetry and prose. Gilfillan continued to produce many critical and biographical essays, but none of the three ever quite regained the ear of the public.

When *A Life Drama* was published the *Athenæum* reviewed it favourably, but on January 3, 1857, when Alexander Smith was about to publish his second book, there appeared an article headed "The Last New Poet," in which he was charged with plagiarism on a large scale. I believe the paper was written by Mr. William Allingham, who by the way had been a correspondent of Gilfillan, and had received encouragement from him. Mr. W. M. Rossetti has said that the charge was urged "with more zeal and success than real cogency of proof." At the time Shirley Brooks took up the cudgels for Smith in *Punch*. He parodied Allingham's parallels thus—

"In Mr. Smith's *City Poems*, he says—

> 'And *bees* are *busy* in the yellow hive.'

"What says Dr. Watts?—

> 'How doth the *busy, busy bee*.'

"Mr. Smith—

> 'The age *demands her hero*.'

"Lord Byron—

> 'I *want a hero*, an uncommon want.'"

and concluded by saying that "there is no single word in all Mr. Smith's poetry that has not been previously used by somebody else."

It should be said, however, that Sydney Dobell, afterwards a warm friend of Smith's, had written to Gilfillan as early as 1852 as follows: "Truly there are some magnificent things in his (Alexander Smith's) contributions to the *Critic*, but the more I see of his poetry the more I am impressed with a certain dread of plagiarism which seized me, if you remember, the first time I read your extracts. Not so much plariarism *totidem verbis* as . . . that most fatal plagiarism whose

originality consists in reversing well-known medals." Mr. P. J. Bailey, the author of *Festus*, believed that Smith had plagiarised from him, and late in life stated this very strongly, as I know, both in speech and in print. But certainly Smith was unconscious of plagiarism.

Another of Gilfillan's "discoveries" was John Stanyan Bigg, a journalist in Ulverston, the son of a Wesleyan minister. He wrote *Night and the Soul*, but never achieved a vogue. To Gerald Massey Gilfillan was also specially kind. I have printed his essays on Dobell, Smith, Bigg, and Massey as interesting in their way and belonging to literary history. To the end of his life he was a patron of young authors. Robert Buchanan's first volume was dedicated to him, and Mr. Hall Caine wrote to me in 1892 acknowledging his obligations to the critic. He tells how he sent his long poem of 1874 to Gilfillan: "Gilfillan was a man of much mark at that time, writing frequently, lecturing constantly, travelling a great deal, and still preaching every week. Nevertheless he read my poem and wrote me two letters about it of so much warmth and praise, and so much candour of criticism, that my ambition, if it had ever smouldered, must have been fired afresh, and my best energies put on their mettle."

Gilfillan published his *Second Gallery of Literary Portraits* in 1849. In 1850 he issued *The Bards of the Bible*, which has been the most popular of his books. In 1852 he sent out a spirited little volume entitled *Martyrs, Heroes, and Bards of the Scottish Covenant*. In 1854 appeared the third and last *Gallery of Literary Portraits*. In 1856 he published a kind of autobiography entitled *The History of a Man*—part fact, part fiction. *The History of a Man* was very severely criticised, and Hugh Miller, in the *Witness*, came to the rescue "in a paper, for the generous recognition, strong defence, and brotherly sympathy of which I felt then and feel now profound gratitude." So Gilfillan wrote in his later years. He published also several volumes made up of sermons: *Christianity and our Era*, *Alpha and Omega*, and *Modern Christian Heroes*. In 1867 there appeared *Night: a Poem*. He wrote in 1870 a short life of Sir Walter Scott. But his main work was his Library edition of the *British Poets*. It was published by James Nichol of Edinburgh, brother of Professor Nichol of Glasgow. Six volumes appeared every year, and they were issued by subscription at a guinea for the set. The series began with 7000 subscribers, and continued fairly

successful till the end. At first Gilfillan edited the text, but afterwards that part of the work was committed to Charles Cowden Clarke, and Gilfillan merely contributed introductions. On this part of his work I may quote the judgment of D. G. Rossetti in a letter to Mr. Hall Caine: "I remember your mentioning Gilfillan as having encouraged your first efforts. He was powerful, though sometimes rather 'tall' as a writer, generally most just as a critic, and lastly, a much better man, intellectually and morally, than Aytoun, who tried to 'do for' him. His notice of Swift, in the volume in question, has very great force and eloquence. His whole edition of the *British Poets* is the best of any to read, being such fine type and convenient bulk and weight (a great thing for an arm-chair reader). Unfortunately, he now and then (in the *Less-Read Poets*) cuts down the extracts almost to nothing, and in some cases excises objectionabilities, which is unpardonable. Much better leave the whole out. Also, the edition includes the usual array of nobodies—Addison, Akenside, and the whole alphabet down to Zany and Zero; whereas a great many of the *less-read* would have been much-read by every worthy reader if they had only been printed in full. So well printed an edition of Donne (for instance) would have been a great boon; but from him Gilfillan only gives (among the *less-read*) the admirable *Progress of the Soul*, and some of the pregnant *Holy Sonnets*. Do you know Donne? There is hardly an English poet better worth a thorough knowledge, in spite of his provoking conceits and occasional jagged jargon."

During his later years Mr. Gilfillan was a constant contributor to the *Dundee Advertiser*, then under the care of the late Sir John Leng. Many of his articles showed him at his best as a genial and generous critic. He continued active in the work of his church and in the public life of the city till his sudden death in 1878. He was accorded the honours of a public funeral, and the many testimonies from all sides to his worth showed the place he had made for himself among those who knew him best.

I do not claim for him a permanent place in literature. His faults are on the surface, and they lend themselves but too easily to ridicule and caricature. He had no measure or self-restraint; his work was hasty; he frequently contradicted himself, and he wanted the saving sense of humour which a prose poet needs most of all men. The Scot, it has been truly said, has always been the Scythian of literature, coming in

with barbaric vigour from the out-field, and making short work of forms and conventions. Burns, Wilson, and Carlyle are marked illustrations. From Wilson, Gilfillan mainly drew. But the old story of the Roman and the Goth has been repeated even in Wilson's case, and much sooner in Gilfillan's. The shepherd says in *Noctes Ambrosianæ:* "Wi' respeck to mere literary men, O, dear me, sir! hoo I do gaunt [yawn] when they come out to Mount Benger! They canna shute, they canna fish, they canna loup [leap], they canna warsle [wrestle], they canna soom [swim], they canna put the stane, they canna fling the hammer, they canna even drive a gig." All true, but the Cockney critics have practically wiped out the *Noctes*. "The large succulent Goth, with eyes azure as the heavens, and locks like golden sunbeams," went down before the drilled, dark-eyed little Roman. The want of discipline was fatal.

His warm friend, Samuel Brown, wrote to him: "Do be careful with your second edition. Out with many a little vulgarism of expression. They offend many good judges to the soul, and they add nothing to their effect. Jeffrey was irritated every now and then by this stumbling-stone. Wipe them all clean out; there are hundreds of them. If I were you, I would also put away the mostly ill-founded and unnecessary anecdotes which you have sprinkled your pages withal so liberally. These, I am sure, are sound advices, and they are out of the very core of friendship." Still with all reservations Gilfillan had great merits. No one perceived earlier or more steadfastly the greatness of Shelley. Hazlitt and Lamb were hailed by Gilfillan at a time when many critics miserably under-rated them. Of Macaulay, Gilfillan from the first took his own view undismayed by the clamour of the hour. The justice of one estimate from which he never deviated has yet to be decided. From first to last he unhesitatingly put Tennyson in the second rank of English poets. (George Meredith remembers a Surrey walk with Tennyson in 1851 shortly after a criticism by Gilfillan had appeared in the *Critic*. Every now and then the irate bard paused, drew himself up, and said: "But Apollodorus says I am not a poet.") Above all, he had the saving virtue of enthusiasm.

When he died Dr. Hutchison Stirling wrote to Mrs. Gilfillan: "I most deeply deplore with you the too early loss of this invaluable life. The sad news shocked me and deeply

grieved. The Church has lost its most eloquent and honest pastor; literature its foremost and most genial critic—a man of true genius who could not write a sentence that had not in some way the virtue of his inspiration in it." There are many besides Stirling, and the present writer is one, who can never speak of George Gilfillan with judicial impartiality. They cannot think of what he was without remembering what he was to them.

I have indicated in each of the following essays the source from which it is taken. They are mostly selected on the ground of the author's own preferences.

In 1892 was published *George Gilfillan's Letters and Journals*, with Memoir by Robert A. Watson, M.A., D.D., and Elizabeth S. Watson. This gives a good account of Gilfillan's character and public labours, with many interesting extracts from his letters and journals.

W. ROBERTSON NICOLL.

1909.

The following is a list of his published works:—

Hades, or the Unseen (sermon), 1843; Gallery of Literary Portraits (from the *Dumfries Herald*), 1st series, 1845; 2nd ser., 1850; 3rd ser., 1854; re-issue, 1856-7; Alpha and Omega, or a Series of Scripture Studies, 1850; Book of British Poesy, with an Essay on British Poetry, 1851; Bards of the Bible, 1851; Martyrs, Heroes, and Bards of the Scottish Covenant, 1852; the Fatherhood of God, 1854; Life of Robert Burns, 1856, 1879; History of a Man: a Semi-Autobiographical Romance, 1856; Christianity and our Era, 1857; Remoter Stars in the Church Sky, 1867; Night: a Poem, 1867; Modern Christian Heroes (including Milton, Cromwell, and the Puritans), 1869; Life of Sir Walter Scott, 1870, 1871; Comrie and its Neighbourhood, 1872; Life of the Rev. William Anderson of Glasgow, 1873; Sketches, Literary and Theological, from an unpublished manuscript, 1881.

Lectures and Essays:—Christian Bearings of Astronomy, 1848; Connection between Science, Literature, and Religion, 1849; The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ, 1851; Influence of Burns on Scottish Poetry and Song, 1855; Christian Missions, 1857; The Age of Lead: a Satire, 1858; Life and Works of David Vedder, 1878. He edited The British Poets for James Nichol's series, adding memoirs, between 1853-1860.

Life:—R. A. Watson and E. S. Watson, Letters and Journals, with Memoir, 1892; D. Macrae, George Gilfillan, Anecdotes and Reminiscences, 1891.

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GILFILLAN'S LITERARY PORTRAITS

DR. CHALMERS[1]

THERE are some subjects which seem absolutely inexhaustible. They may be compared to the alphabet, which, after 5000 years, is capable still of new and infinite combinations—or to the sun, whose light is as fresh to-day as it was a million of ages ago—or to space, which has opened her hospitable bosom to myriads on myriads of worlds, and has ample room for myriads on myriads more. Such a fresh ever-welling theme is Chalmers, and will remain so for centuries to come; and we make no apology at all for bidding his mighty shade sit once more for its portrait, from no prejudiced or unloving hand.

We first heard Dr. Chalmers preach on Sabbath, October 9, 1831, when introducing the Rev. Mr. Martin, of St. George's, Edinburgh, to his flock. Through the kindness of a friend who sat in the church, we obtained, although with difficulty, a seat in the very front of the gallery, near a pew in which, on Sabbath, February 8, 1846, we enjoyed a comfortable nap under a sermon from the Rev. Dr. Brunton! There was no napping *that* forenoon. We went, we remember, with excited but uncertain expectations. We had read Chalmers's Astronomical Discourses, and had learned to admire them, but had no clear or decided view of their author, and were not without certain Dissenting prejudices against him. Being near-sighted, and the morning being rather dim, we could not catch a distinct glimpse of his features. We saw only a dark large mass of man bustling up the pulpit stairs, as if in some dread and desperate haste. We heard next a hoarse voice, first giving out the psalm in a tone of rapid familiar energy, and after it was sung, and prayer was over, announcing for text, "He that is unjust let him be unjust still (*stull*, he pronounced it), he that is filthy (*fulthy*, he

[1] From the *Scottish Review*, April 1853.

called it), let him be filthy still, and he that is righteous let him be righteous still, and he that is holy let him be holy *stull*." And then, like an eagle leaving a mountain cliff, he launched out at once upon his subject, and soared on without any diminution of energy or flutter of wing for an hour and more. The discourse is published, and most of our readers have probably read it. It had two or three magnificent passages, which made the audience for a season one soul. A burst especially we remember, in reference to the materialism of heaven—"There may be palms of triumph, I do not know—there may be floods of melody," etc.; and then he proceeded to show that heaven was more a state than a place. On the whole, however, we were disappointed, as indeed we were, at the first blush, with all the Edinburgh notabilities. Strange as it may seem, neither Wilson, nor Chalmers, nor Professor Leslie, nor Dr. Gordon, nor Jeffrey, produced, *at first*, on us a tithe of the impression which many country ministers, whose names are extant only in the Lamb's Book of Life, had easily and ineffaceably left. We learned, indeed, afterwards to admire Wilson and Chalmers to the very depths of our hearts; and John Bruce, whom at first, too, we rather disrelished, became ultimately an idol. But, on the whole, our first feeling, in reference to the Edinburgh celebrities, lay and cleric, was that of intense and almost contemptuous disappointment.

This feeling would be forgiven by the men themselves, or even by the warmest of their admirers, if they could have seen us, a year or two afterwards, listening to Wilson on the immortality of the soul, to John Bruce on the text, "The sting of death is sin," or to Thomas Chalmers repeating, at the opening of the General Assembly of 1833, the sermon on "He that is *filthy* let him be *filthy* still." That morning opened in all the splendour of May—and the Assembly which met knew that the Reform Bill had passed since its last session, and that it must become perforce a reforming Assembly too. Chalmers rose to the greatness of the occasion. He "laid about him like a man inspired." After delivering, with greatly increased energy, all the original discourse, he added a new peroration of prodigious power, drawing the attention of his "Fathers and Brethren" to the circumstances in which they were placed, and to the duties to which they were called. It told like a thunderbolt. Even the gallery, which was half empty, was absolutely electrified; and the divinity students and young ladies who had been perseveringly ogling each other there, were compelled to

turn their eyes and hearts away towards the glowing countenance and heaving form of the "old man eloquent."

We occasionally heard him, too, in his class-room, always with great interest and often with vivid delight. Our tone of enthusiasm, however, was somewhat restrained, from our frequent intercourse with his students, who in general over-rated him, and were sometimes disposed to cry out, "It is the voice of a god, not of a man," and whose imitations of his style and manner were frequent, and grotesquely unsuccessful. We never but once heard him there rise to his highest pitch. It was at the close of a lecture illustrating the character and claims of Christianity; when grasping, as it were, all around him (like an assaulted man for a sword), in search of a yet stronger proof of his point, he lifted up his own *Astronomical Discourses*, and read—(with a brow flushing like a crystal goblet newly filled with wine—an eye glaring with sudden excitation—a voice "pealing harsh thunder"—and a motion as if some shirt of Nessus had just fallen upon his shoulders—amid dead and almost awful silence)—the following passage:—

"Let the priests of another faith ply their prudential expedients, and look so wise and so wary in the execution of them; but Christianity stands in a higher and firmer attitude. The defensive armour of a shrinking or timid policy does not suit her. Hers is the naked majesty of truth; and with all the grandeur of age, but with none of its infirmities, has she come down to us, and gathered new strength from the battles she has won in the many controversies of many generations. With such a religion as this there is nothing to hide. All should be above-boards; and the broadest light of day should be made fully and freely to circulate through all her secrecies. But secrets she has none. To her belong the frankness and simplicity of conscious greatness."

This is eloquent writing; but where the fiery edge of mighty bardic power which seemed to surround it as he spoke? That is gone; and the number must fast lessen of those who now can remember those strange accompaniments of Chalmers's eloquence—the uplifted, half-extracted eye—the large flushed forehead—the pallor of the cheek contrasting with it—the eager lips—the mortal passion struggling within the heaving breast—the short, fin-like, but furious motions of the arms, and the tones of the voice, which seemed sometimes to be grinding their way down into your ear and soul till you were taken by storm.

We heard Chalmers once, and only once, again. It was in a

large town in the north of Scotland, in the spring of 1839. The audience was crowded, although it was only afternoon. The object of the discourse was to defend church extension. For an hour or so the lecturer was chiefly employed in statistical details. He lifted up, and read occasional extracts from certain dingy, and, as he called them, "delightful ill-spelled letters," from working men in support of the object. Toward the end he became more animated, and closed a brilliant burst of ten minutes' duration by quoting the lines of Burns—

> From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs;
> These make her loved at home, revered abroad.
> Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
> An honest man's the noblest work of God.

The effect was overwhelming. We happened, in leaving the church, to pass near the orator, and were greatly struck with the rapt look of his face—

> The wind was down, but still the sea ran high.

A certain pallid gleam had succeeded the flushed ardour of his appearance in the pulpit. It was the last time we were ever to gaze on the strange, coarse, but most powerful and meaning countenance of Dr. Chalmers.

And yet when, years later, we saw Duncan's picture of him, he seemed still alive before us. The leonine massiveness of the head, body, and brow—the majestic repose of the attitude—the eye withdrawn upwards into a deep happy dream—the air of simple homely grandeur about the whole person and bearing—were all those of Chalmers, and combined to prove him the Genius of Scotland—the hirsute Forest-God of a rugged but true-hearted land.

It was this air of unshorn power which marked him out from all his ecclesiastical contemporaries, and contributed in some measure to his popularity. Scotland—the land of mountain and of flood—loves that her idols shall be large and shaggy. Think of her worship of the rough John Knox—of the stalwart sons of the Covenant—of Burns and Wilson—the two tameless spirits!—and of her own homely, all-reflecting, and simple Sir Walter Scott. What cares she, in comparison with these, for her polished Robertsons and Jeffreys? Even Edward Irving, with all his power, was rather too fine a pulpit artist, too conscious of himself, too much of a dancing bear for her taste.

It is well remarked by Jeffrey, in vindicating the Scottish language from the charge of vulgarity, that it is not the language of a province, like Yorkshire, but of an ancient independent

kingdom. So Chalmers's peculiarities and roughness of speech were those of the ancient "kingdom of Fife;" and in his "whuches," and his "fulthies," and his bad quantities, after the first blush, there was found a strange antique charm—they were of the earth earthly, and suited the stout aboriginal character of the man. They were but the rough grating of the wheels of the huge and wealthy wain, as it moved homewards amid the autumn twilight, and told of rude plenty and of massive power.

The effects of his eloquence have been often described. Many orators have produced more cheers, and shone more in brilliant individual points: Chalmers's power lay in pressing on his whole audience before him, through the sheer momentum of genius and enthusiasm. He treated his hearers as constituting "one mind," and was himself "one strength," urging it, like a vast stone, upwards. In this he very seldom failed. He might not always convince the understandings—he often offended the tastes; but, unlike Sisyphus, he pushed his stone to the summit—he secured at least a temporary triumph.

This he gained greatly from the intensity of his views, as well as from the earnestness of his temperament, and the splendour of his genius. He had strong, clear, angular, although often one-sided and mistaken, notions on the subjects he touched; and these, by incessant reiteration, by endless turning round, by dint of dauntless furrowing, he succeeded in *ploughing* into the minds of his hearers. Or it seemed a process of *stamping:* "I must press such and such a truth on them, whether they hear or forbear. I shall stamp on till it is fixed undeniably and for ever upon their minds." Add to this the unconsciousness of himself. He never *seemed*, at least, to be thinking about himself, nor very much of his hearers. He was occupied entirely with those big bulking ideas of which he was the mere organ, and he taught his audience to think of *them* principally too. How grand it was to witness a strong and gifted man transfigured into the mere medium of an idea!—his whole body so filled with its light that you seemed to *see it* shining through him, as through a transparent vase!

His imagination was a quality in him of which much nonsense used to be said. It was now made his only faculty, and now it was described as of the Shakspere or Jeremy Taylor order. In fact, it was not by any means even his highest power. Strong, broad, Baconian logic was his leading faculty; and he had, besides, a boundless command of a certain order of language, as

well as all the burning sympathies and energies of the orator. Taking him all in all, he was unquestionably a man of lofty genius; but it very seldom assumed the truly poetic form, and was rather warm than rich. Power of illustration he possessed in plenty; but in *curiosa felicitas*, short, compact, hurrying strokes, as of lightning, and that fine sudden imagery in which strong and beautiful thought so naturally incarnates itself, he was rather deficient. He was, consequently, one of our least terse and quotable authors. Few sentences, collecting in themselves the results of long trains of thinking, in a new and sparkling form—like "apples of gold in settings of silver"—are to be found in his writings. Nor do they abound in bare, strong aphorisms. Let those who would see his deficiency in this respect compare him, not with the Jeremy Taylors, Barrows, and Donnes, merely, but with the Burkes, Hazlitts, and Coleridges of a later day, and they will understand our meaning. His writings resemble rather the sublime diffusiveness of a Paul, than the deep, solitary, and splendid dicta of the great Preacher-King of ancient Israel.

A classic author he is not, and never can become. From this destiny, his Scotticisms, vulgarities, and new combinations of sounds and words, do not necessarily exclude him; but his merits (as a *mere literary* man) do not counterbalance his defects. The power of the works, in fact, was not equal to the power of the man. He always, indeed, threw his heart, but not always his artistic consciousness, into what he wrote. Hence he is generally "rude in speech, although not in knowledge." His utterance is never confused, but it is often hampered, as of one speaking in a foreign tongue. This sometimes adds to the effect of his written composition—it often added amazingly to the force of those extempore harangues he was in the habit of uttering, amid the intervals of his lectures, to his students. Those stammerings, strugglings, repetitions, risings from and sittings down into his chair—often, however, coming to some fiery burst, or culminating in some rapid and victorious climax—reminded you of Wordsworth's lines—

> So have I, not unmoved in mind,
> Seen birds of tempest-loving kind,
> Thus beating up against the wind.

You liked to see this strong-winged bird of the storm matching his might against it—now soaring up to overcome it—now sinking down to undermine it—now screaming aloud in its teeth—now half-choked in the gust of its fury—but always

moving onwards, and sometimes riding triumphant on its changed or subjugated billow! But all this did not (except to those who had witnessed the phenomenon) tend to increase the artistic merit or permanent effect of his works.

No oratory can be printed *entire*. Every speaker, who is not absolutely dull and phlegmatic, says something far more through his tones, or eye, or gestures, than his bare words can tell. But this is more the case with some than with others. About the speaking of Whitfield there was a glare of—shall we say vulgar? —earnestness, which, along with his theatrical but transcendent elocution, lives only in tradition. It was the same with Kirwan, a far more commonplace man. Struthers, a Relief minister in Edinburgh, at the beginning of this century, seems to have possessed the same incommunicable power, and his sermon on the battle of Trafalgar lives as a miraculous memory on the minds of a few—and nowhere else. The late Dr. Heugh of Glasgow, possessed a Canning-like head, as well as a certain *copperplate charm* in his address, which have not, as they could not, be transferred to his printed sermons. And so, in perhaps a still larger degree, with Dr. Chalmers; the difference being, that while in the others the manner seemed to fall out from the man, like a gay but becoming garment, in Chalmers it was wrapped convulsively around him, like the mantle of a dying Cæsar. It is but his naked body that we now behold.

Finer still it was, we have been told, to come in suddenly upon the inspired man in his study, when the full heat of his thought had kindled up his being into a flame—when, in concert with the large winter fire blazing beside him, his eye was flaming and speaking to itself—his brow flushing like a cloud in its solitude —his form moving like that of a Pythoness on her stool—and now and then his voice bursting silence, and showing that, as often in the church he seemed to fancy himself in solitude, so, often in solitude, he thought himself thundering in the church. Those who saw him in such moods had come into the forge of the Cyclops; and yet so far was he from being disturbed or angry, he would rise and salute them with perfect politeness, and even kindliness; but they were the politeness and kindliness of one who had been interrupted while forming a two-edged sword for Mars, or carving another figure upon the shield of Achilles.

It is curious, entering in spirit into the *studies* or retirements of great authors, in the past or the present, and watching their various kinds and degrees of excitement while composing their

productions. We see a number of interesting figures—Homer, with his sightless eyes, but ears preternaturally open, rhapsodising to the many-sounding sea his immortal harmonies—Eschylus, so agitated (according to tradition), while framing his terrible dialogues and choruses, that he might have been mistaken for his own Orestes pursued by the Furies—Dante, stern, calm, silent, yet with a fierce glance at times from his hollow eye, and a convulsive movement in his tiger-like lower jaw, telling of the *furor* that was boiling within—Shakspere, serene even over his tragic, and smiling a gentle smile over his comic, creations—Scott, preserving, alike in depicting the siege of Torquilstone, the humours of Caleb Balderstone, and the end of the family of Ravenswood, the same gruff yet good-natured equanimity of countenance—Byron, now scowling a fierce scowl over his picture of a shipwreck, and now grinning a ghastly smile while dedicating his "Don Juan" to Southey—Shelley, wearing on his fine features a look of perturbation and wonder, as of a cherub only *half* fallen, and not yet at home in his blasphemous attitude of opposition to the Most High—Wordsworth, murmuring a half-articulate music over the slowly-filling page of "Ruth," or the "Eclipse in Italy"—Coleridge, nearly asleep, and dreaming over his own gorgeous creations, like a drowsy bee in a heather bloom—Wilson, as Hogg describes him, when they sat down to write verses in neighbouring rooms, *howling* out his enthusiasm (and when he came to this pitch, poor Hogg uniformly felt himself vanquished, and threw down his pen!)—or, in fine, Chalmers, as aforesaid, agonising in the sweat of his great intellectual travail!

We have spoken of Chalmers as possessed of an idea which drowned his personal feelings, and pressed all his powers into one focus. This varied, of course, very much at different stages of his history. It was, at first, that of a purely scientific theism. He believed in God as a dry demonstrated fact, which he neither trembled at nor loved—whose personality he granted, but scarcely seems to have *felt*. From this he passed to a more decided form of belief, worship, and love for the Great I Am, and is said to have spent a portion of his youth in constant and delighted meditation upon God and his works, like one of the ancient Indian or Egyptian mystics. From this pillar he descended, and, as a preacher, tried to form a compromise between science and a certain shallow and stripped form of Christianity. The attempt was sincere, but absurd in idea and unsuccessful in execution. The *vitality* of Christianity became

next his darling argument, and was pled by him with unmitigated urgency for many years. Christianity must be alive, active, aggressive, or was no Christianity at all. This argument began, by and by, in his mind to strike out into various branches. If alive and life-giving, Christianity ought to give life, first of all to literary and scientific men; secondly, to the commercial; thirdly, to the poor; and fourthly, to governments. And we may see this four-headed argument pervading his book on Astronomy—that magnificent failure—his *Sermons on Commerce*, his *Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns*, and his innumerable brochures on the questions of Church Extension and of Non-intrusion. Nay, in his penultimate paper in the *North British Review*, we find him, almost with his last breath, renewing the cry for "fruit," as the main answer to that tide of German scepticism which none saw more clearly than he coming over the church and the world. That he always pled this great argument of practicalising Christianity with discretion or success, we are far from asserting; nay, we grant that he committed as many blunders as he gained triumphs. Nor have the results been commensurate. Literary and scientific men, have not, alas! listened to the voice of this charmer, but have walked on their own uneasy way, over the "burning marle" of unhappy speculation; and the Stars and the Cross are as distant from each other as ever. The commercial spirit of the times is far enough yet from being thoroughly Christianised; and the golden rule does not yet hang suspended over our warehouses and dockyards. The poor are, as a mass, sinking every year more and more deeply into the gulphs of infidelity and vice; and the great problem of how the State is to help—if it help at all—the Church, seems as far from solution as in the year 1843 or 1847. Still, Chalmers has not lived in vain. He has left a burning testimony against many of the crying evils of his time, especially against that selfishness which is poisoning almost all ranks alike, and in which, as in one stagnant pool, so many elements, otherwise discordant, are satisfied to "putrify in peace." He has taken up the reproach of the Gospel, and bound it as a crown around his brow. From the most powerful pulpit in the land, he preached Christ and him crucified. He has created various benevolent and pious movements, which are likely long to perpetuate his memory. He has shaken from the pulpit the dust of ages—a dust never to gather again; and he has laid his hand upon, and to some degree, although not altogether, shattered those barriers—either absurd in the folly

of man, or awful in the providence of God—which have too long separated Christian principle from general progress, the Bible from the people, the pulpit from the press, and made religion little else than " a starry stranger " in an alien land. We accept him as a rude type of better things—as the dim day-star of a new and brighter era.

We linger as we trace over in thought the leading incidents of his well-known story. We see the big-headed, warm-hearted, burly boy, playing upon the beach at Anstruther, and seeming like a gleam of early sunshine upon that coldest of all coasts. We follow him, as he strides along with large, hopeful, awkward steps, to the gate of St. Andrews. We see him, a second Dominie Sampson, in his tutor's garret at Arbroath, in the midst of a proud and pompous family—himself as proud, though not so pompous, as they. We follow him next to the peaceful manse of Kilmany, standing amid its green woods and hills, in a very nook of the land, whence he emerges, now to St. Andrews to battle with the stolid and slow-moving professors of that day, now to Dundee to buy materials for chemical research (on one occasion setting himself on fire with some combustible substance, and requiring to run to a farmhouse to get himself put out!), now to the woods and hills around to botanise—ay, even on the Sabbath-day!—and now to Edinburgh to attend the General Assembly, and give earnest of those great oratorical powers which were afterwards to astonish the Church and the world. With solemn awe we stand by his bed-side during that long, mysterious illness, which brought him to himself, and taught him that religion was a reality, as profound as sin, sickness, and death. We mark him, then, rising up from his couch, like an eagle newly bathed—like a giant refreshed—and commencing that course of evangelical teaching and action only to be terminated in the grave. We pursue him to Glasgow, and see him sitting down in a plain house in Sauchiehall Street, and proceeding to write sermons which are to strike that city like a planet, and make him the real King of the West. We mark him next, somewhat worn and wearied, returning to his *Alma Mater*, to resume his old games of golf on the links, his old baths in the bay, and to give an impetus, which has never yet entirely subsided, to that grass-grown city of Rutherford and Halyburton. Next we see him bursting like a shell this narrow confine, and soaring away to " stately Edinburgh, throned on crags," to become there a principality and power among many, and to give stimulus and inspiration to hosts of young aspirants.

With less pleasure we follow the after steps of his career,—the restless and uneasy agitations in which he engaged, which shook the energies of his constitution, impaired the freshness of his mind, rendered him, in fact, "too cheap," and paved the way for his premature and hasty end. With deep interest, however, if not with entire sympathy, we see him sitting at the head of a new and powerful ecclesiastical body, which owed, if not its existence, yet much of its glory, to him; so that the grey head of Chalmers in that Canonmills Hall seemed to outshine the splendours of mitres, and coronets, and crowns. We watch him with far profounder feelings, preaching to the poor outcasts of the West Port, or sitting like a little child beside them, as others are telling them the simple story of the cross. We follow him on his "last pilgrimage" to the south—confronting senates—going out of his way to visit the widows of Hall and Foster—bursting into the studies of sublime unhappy sceptics, and giving them a word in season—preaching wherever he had opportunity, and returning in haste to die! And our thoughts and feelings rise to a climax, as we hear the midnight cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!" raised beside his couch; and, entering in, behold the grand old Christian Giant—the John Knox of the nineteenth century—laid gently on his pillow, asleep, with that sleep which knows no waking, till the trumpet shall sound, and when *he* surely shall be among the foremost to rise to meet the Master, and to go in with him into the eternal banqueting-room.

What divine of the age, on the whole, can we name with Chalmers? Horsley was, perhaps, an abler man, but where the moral grandeur? Hall had the moral grandeur, and a far more cultivated mind; Foster had a sterner, loftier, and richer genius; but where, in either, the seraphic ardour, activity, and energy of Christian character possessed by Chalmers? Irving, as an orator, had more artistic skill, and, at the same time, his blood was warm with a more volcanic and poetic fire; but he was only a brilliant fragment, not a whole—he was a meteor to a star—a comet to a sun—a Vesuvius, peaked, blue, crowned with fire, to a domed Mont Blanc, that altar of God's morning and evening sacrifice. Chalmers stood alone; and centuries may elapse ere the Church shall see—and when did she ever more need to see?—another such spirit as he.

JAMESON OF METHVEN[1]

MANY years have elapsed since we first saw and heard the venerable and gifted man whose character we are now about to sketch. It was at Stirling, we think, that we first heard him—at least, our first impression of his peculiar genius was received there. We well remember, on an autumnal Saturday evening, somewhere about the year 1825, being despatched into the room where he was alone, preparing for the labours of the morrow, with a candle! There he sat, in the half-darkened apartment, no notes or books beside him, but with a look of rapt contemplation which, on our entrance, changed into a smile of the most perfect benignity, as he said, "Thank you, my dear boy." On the morrow, he preached from the words in Micah, "Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old." We remember nothing of the discourse, except the lingering emphasis with which he repeated the words, "solitarily in the wood," which seemed to him unspeakably dear and suggestive, and our amazement and delight at the grotesqueness of his delivery, which certainly (we shall describe it by and by) was the *queerest* we ever witnessed. Afterwards we met him often, and heard him perhaps ten times; and all our interviews, and some of the sermons he preached, are as fresh in our memory as the events of yesterday. He admitted us, at Crieff, to the communion of the church; we preached for him the last Sabbath we had to spare ere our ordination, and enjoyed one of the most delightful evenings with him we ever spent; and we parted with him, in September, 1836, at the quay of Dundee—he on his way to the ordination of his son, as a missionary for Jamaica, in the highest spirits, with a smile (*the* smile, we should say, for it was unalterable) on his cheek, and a joke in his mouth; and in four months he was no more, having gone "the nearest way to the celestial gate."

We have been fortunate enough to meet some of the finest and noblest of our contemporaries; but we never met a man,

[1] From *A Third Gallery of Literary Portraits*, 1854.

taking him all in all, in native genius, in amiability, in humility, in untaught gentlemanhood, in warm and wide sympathies, in meekness, piety, and childlike simplicity, in holiness, and in charity, equal to Jameson. He reminded you of the "beloved disciple." You wondered that he was not translated. Indeed, his death at last seemed like a translation. He had been visiting a sick member of his church. On his return, repairing to his study, he sat down to write a letter, the purport of which was to request a favour for one of his flock from the M.P. of Perthshire. He had begun a word commencing with the letter *o*, when he sank down from his seat, and died. The members of his family, who had been waiting dinner for him, coming in, found him fallen as if he had deliberately lain down to sleep—a coal-scuttle near him not displaced, the fire-fender avoided, and *the* smile shining all radiant on his face, having defied and survived death. "Surely," said one of his children afterwards, "the angels had *straikit* him."

His own wish had been, we have heard, to die slowly, to taste the dark draught drop by drop, to "know all about death." But it was not granted him. His father, too, the Antiburgher minister of Kilwinning, had died in a moment. His son John was conducting family worship. When he ceased his prayer and opened his eyes, he found the old man away! Let those who ponder the last tremulous tracings of the hand of genius, or the last muttered accents of its touched lips, the "But" of Frederick Schlegel, or the "It is getting dark—you may go home, boys," of poor Adam of the High School, not forget the "*o*" of Jameson, nor fail to find in it an emblem of the yearning earnestness and pathetic poetry which were the essence of his nature.

A poet assuredly Jameson was, although he wrote very little verse, and that little was not worthy of his genius, nay, was singularly poor, and should never have seen the light of publication; but he was so thoroughly imaginative, that he could not preach a sermon or think a thought without rushing, or at least seeking to rush, into the poetical. The want of thorough culture and an extreme inequality of spirits often enfeebled his flights; but the natural motion of his mind was flying; his tendency was ever upwards, and his flights were often transcendent in ease, beauty, and power.

Speculative intellect he either entirely wanted, or, in reverence for the Word of God, had effectually curbed; consequently, we cannot call his genius one of that subtlest and most profound

order which combines with, and includes, the philosophic element. Nor was his taste quite equal to his genius. He was the mere creature of heart and fancy. Not that his other powers were originally feeble—they were, on the contrary, strong—but they had not received the same cultivation, and had yielded without a struggle to the overbearing influence of his favourite faculties. He was essentially a painter, and the best passages in his sermons were graphic, bold, or tender pictures of incidents in Scripture history, in which he sometimes contented himself with filling up the outline of the story, but often, too, threw in strokes and figures entirely his own. He had a magnificent lecture on Christ's entering into Jerusalem, in which he describes those who had been miraculously healed running in the train of their deliverer, the dumb singing his praise, the lame leaping as a hart, and the risen dead loudest in the glad hosanna. It was the very thought of Haydon (whose celebrated picture, however, he had not seen), and he was pleased when told of the coincidence. We heard him once lecture for two hours on the "Gift of tongues at Pentecost," in a succession of the finest pictures and illustrations, to which all his audience listened in rapt attention. He had a number of similar discourses on the Serpent in the wilderness, the Flood, the Lily among Thorns, various incidents in the Acts, which, as they were never written fully out, are now irrecoverably lost. One sermon worthy of him is extant. It is entitled "True Fame," and was conceived in rather singular circumstances. Crossing, on the morning of the Monday of a sacrament, from Methven to the Broom of Dalreoch, he saw a woodman felling a tree. It reminded him of the words in the Psalm—"A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees;" and straightway the sermon *came* upon his mind in a burst; the subject fell down before him like the tree before the axe; and, arrived, he mounted the pulpit, and preached it with great power. Soon afterwards the substance of it was printed in a collection of discourses by the ministers of his church, and has been much admired. A gentleman who heard it on its first delivery assured us that he never heard anything superior, and that it was even better in its preached than in its printed form.

No man, indeed, was more dependent upon moods and moments than Jameson. It became a proverb, that he was either the best or the worst of preachers. Nervous to a very extraordinary degree, fluctuating in spirits, extremely sensitive

of the slights and coldness of a non-appreciating audience, intensely conscious of the defects of his delivery, and shrinking from every mode and occasion of display, he very often became the dullest, the most tiresome, the most unprogressive of preachers. He sometimes gaped, gasped, bungled, and repeated himself, till strangers thought him an idiot, but *not* an inspired one. He required favourable circumstances to develop his powers, and some of these were singular enough. He liked a small audience of good plain Seceder materials; he loved better to preach on a week-day than on the Sabbath, chiefly because the hearers are then more fit and few; weather, private circumstances, and public events, all influenced his preaching; a striking anecdote, or even a harmless jest, recounted to him ere he mounted the pulpit, generally produced a good sermon; and if he failed in his first sermon from a text, in a sort of rebound of generous revenge at himself, the second was sure to be successful. His manner was certainly far from graceful. It was now slow and now violent, now drawling and now fierce. When depressed, he almost groaned; and when vehemently excited, he roared and yelled out his words of fire. And yet, whenever he rose to his true power, you felt, as in the case of all men of genius, that his manner gave a truer emphasis to his writing than the mere mellifluous and studied rhetoric of an actor could have given. Like Chalmers, Burke, and Wilson, when thoroughly roused, all his faults of action and pronunciation were drowned in the flood of thought and poetry which poured from his lips, and the "contortions" of the sibyl only increased the momentum of the inspiration. His appearance neither added to nor detracted much from the effect. The figure was tall and slightly bent; his eye small and somewhat dull; his brow rather lofty than broad; the features coarse, but rendered amiable by the perpetual presence of a gentle smile, and interesting by a look of far-stretching and delighted contemplation. There was much in his face that resembled John Hunter's, the great anatomist. Like him, you saw a man dwelling in a world of his own, and occupied by some fine and original train of thought.

He was never, we have heard, half so eloquent as in his prayer meetings and classes of young people. "Oh, that class," he said once; "I sometimes feel as if heaven were opening on me there." In such scenes he felt perfectly at ease, and spoke out of the abundant fulness of one of the warmest of hearts and most ingenious of minds; and, as he spake, many hearts, we

doubt not, burned within them with a fervour which shall survive life, and mingle congenially with the raptures of eternity.

And yet we must admit that he was far from being generally popular. A hundred anecdotes recur to us in proof. We have heard spruce cits of the east or west, overflowing the while with praises of some D.D. or other of their respective cities, speaking of him with contempt and pity: "Yes, a good but weak man; would never do in a town; what a different man is our wonderful Dr. So-so!" This is almost a literal transcript of a sentence uttered by a worthy commercial traveller from Glasgow, who once drove us in his gig to Perth, as we were passing the village of Methven. At tent-preachings, he was often left almost alone, preaching to the green grass and the summer flowers. But the most amusing case in point is a story he used to tell with glee himself. He was preaching one day, at great length, at the Broom of Dalreoch. A member of his family was to come to church at a certain hour to give away a child. When she reached the door, a countryman, who did not know her, was coming forth, slapping the door behind him in huge wrath. "Is the sermon done?" she inquired. "Dune!" he replied; "the havering ass, he'll no be dune the nicht!"

But, apart from *such* "havering asses," Jameson, in his better moods, had not a few admirers. Some plain but sensible people, in all congregations, hung upon his lips; the majority of his own charge adored him; and his brethren, with one accord, delighted to do him honour.

This latter fact proceeded not entirely from his pre-eminent genius, which might have bred envy in many of their minds, but from the perfect meekness, gentleness, and tenderness of his character, which was free, almost to a fault, and to a weakness, from those sterner and fiercer qualities which some honest men almost require for the thorough establishment of their independence and individuality, in a world so hollow and conventional as this. He was a man of peace, and, along with a powerful, discerning intellect, there was, as Carlyle says of a very different person, "a generous incredulity in his heart." He could hardly believe or speak ill of a human being; and this quality served to colour unduly his estimate of inferior intellects —to induce him sometimes to praise the common-places of others above his own inimitable gems of genius, and to sit at the feet of men who were hardy fit to act as his amanuenses.

Indeed, around Jameson's mind there ever hung a fine floating atmosphere of enthusiasm, which magnified and beautified

all he saw. Nature he loved to a passion. A friend of ours talks with delight of a grace uttered by him on the top of Ben Voirlich, 3300 feet above the level of the sea. Literature was very dear to him. His blood rose when he talked of Campbell's poetry or Scott's novels; and his cheek flushed a deep red, we remember, when we repeated to him Blake's "Lines to a Tiger," which he had till then never heard. Himself the purest of men, he had yet a wide charity for offenders. In his *Letters*, he calls Burns that "strange man Burns." He has not the heart to utter one harsh or angry word. For the nobler specimens of humanity, for children, for the young generally, for his brethren in the ministry, he overflowed with good wishes and unaffected warmth of love. And the same excess of kindliness was manifested in his religious views and feelings. If ever man idolised the very *letter* of the Bible, it was Jameson. He fancied that he had found all modern inventions anticipated in it. "Gas! What was the cloud of fire by night but gas? Think of a whole wilderness lighted up with gas!" The modern soiree was just the ancient love-feast revived. Nay, he did not despair of finding out the steam-engine in the Bible! And while this discovers a certain weakness, united to great strength, it is a weakness so characteristic and so harmless, that we cannot but say, Blessings on the kind-hearted Bibliolater!

And what has such a man done? What has he left to justify the praise which, in unison with the opinions of all who really knew him, we have thus sincerely bestowed? It is so little, although so fine and true, that we must draw largely upon whatever credit we may have acquired for speaking the truth, as we ask such of our readers as were strangers to his very name to accept our statements.

Many things prevented Jameson from doing justice to his powers, either in preaching or by the press. Eminently faithful in his pastoral calling, he was yet constitutionally indolent, and fond, we suspect, of reverie and day-dreams. Then he lacked ambition, or was in a position where it had never met with adequate nourishment. His habit of mental composition was somewhat pernicious to the compression and carefulness of his style. His culture was liberal, and his knowledge extensive, but he had never strictly trained or thoroughly furnished his mind. He became thus rather a child of genius—mutable, impulsive, uncertain—than a spiritual potentate ruling others through the power by which he had first mastered himself. Such causes, united to the non-appreciation of the general

public—the "want of honour in his own country," common to prophets—prevented him from asserting and taking the place for which his gifts and graces had pre-fitted him—a place, we hesitate not to say, not far from that of Hall and Chalmers, although, like theirs, very considerably below that of Foster and Coleridge, the two mightiest Christian intellects of the nineteenth century in Britain.

Still, as no subject could he touch without beautifying it with a portion of the lustre of the wings of his dove-like genius, so he has left some fragmentary revelations of himself which are interesting, especially to those who can associate with them the look, and voice, and manner of the gifted and amiable man. His first and only separate production was a pamphlet, entitled, "Observations on the Present State of Theological Tuition in the United Secession Church"—a pamphlet containing the germ of a plan which has since, in part, been adopted. Previous to that period, the tuition of the students was committed to one professor; but afterwards two were appointed—Dr. Dick, who (although he clipped the wings of Pollok, and treated with proper severity the silly *twaddling imitations* of imagination and fine writing which abounded in the sermons of some of his aspiring students) was usually as just a critic as he was an able divine; and the amiable Dr. Mitchell, who, next to the subject of our present sketch, approached nearer moral perfection than any clergyman we ever knew. And then (and greatly owing to Jameson's curious pamphlet, the first sentence of which was—"In England, it requires ten men to make a pin; in Scotland it requires only one man to make a minister, and hence it is that, in polish and point, a batch of Scotch parsons is so far inferior to a batch of English pins!") three others were added to their number.

"True Fame" we have already characterised. It is not a finished, but it is far better—a bold, striking, earnest, and original discourse. We extract the introduction:—"The scene of the 74th Psalm is Jerusalem lying in heaps; the poet, the child of holy inspiration, appears on the ruins, and, in notes of desolation and woe, strikes his harp to the fallen fortunes of his country. It was not that the pleasant land now lay waste, and it did lie waste; it was not that the daughters of Jerusalem were slain, and her streets ran red, and they did run red; but it was the temple, the temple of the Lord, with its altars, its sanctuary, its holy of holies, levelled to the ground, rubbish where beauty stood, ruin where strength was—its glory fled,

its music ceased, its solemn assemblies no more, and its priesthood immolated, or carried far away. These had shed their glory over Israel, and over all the land; these, in their turn, were Israel's glory, and it was the destruction of these which gave its tone of woe to the heart of the Israelite indeed. In the verses succeeding our text, the prophet is about to represent the destruction of the temple; at that instant his imagination flies back to far-distant times, and, in the retreat, the bard, heart-throbbing, gathers strength, from the recollection of their prosperous and happier state, to pour a deeper swell of interest on the desolations which lay before him."

Such is a specimen of the style and spirit; but it ought to be read as a whole; and those who do this cannot fail, besides the general manliness and power, to notice here and there glimpses of deep insight. Thus, speaking of infidelity as it appeared after the Reformation, he says, "the bait was eagerly and widely caught by the *feeble* infancy of the rising science of Europe;" thereby expressing the true idea, that infidelity is the child of sciolism, and that more perfect knowledge may tend to bring men back to a child-like belief, and ultimate wonder again.

But by far the most characteristic and remarkable memorial of this good man is to be found in that little volume of letters published posthumously. These are chiefly addressed to afflicted friends, and are exquisitely adapted to instruct, as well as to console. Some of them, we hesitate not to say, are equal to any letters in the English language; nay, Cowper alone has equalled their *naïveté*, pathos, and occasional humour. Such sentences as the following abound in them. Speaking of a young girl, whom we remember well, who died suddenly, and in the very bloom of her early promise, he says: "It seems she was at the class on Monday; how would her youthful spirit be surprised, ere Thursday, to find herself in a land of light and brilliancy, where she had only to open her eyes to read all knowledge, and to take her place among the accomplished spirits of the just made perfect!" Again, addressing the same amiable, but sorely-afflicted and bereaved father on the death of a lovely boy —the most beautiful boy we ever saw—he says: "When death breaks in amongst our children, there is made a great gulf, and we, poor parents! can only look, and feel, and weep. The place well known amongst the rest is empty, the place at the table is empty, their place *in your prayers* is empty, and the face which met you at the door, with *all its little news*, meets you no more. Bitterness gathers on my heart, and I must stop." Hear once

more this fine and strange burst: "Ay, commend me to the resurrection of the dead! Why, here is a knot of old chaps—Noah, and Shem, and Abraham, and Jacob—met on a fine sunny morning at breakfast, all *canty*, and shaking hands at the meeting for *auld langsyne*. Noah has quite forgot the terrible pother he was put into at the first roar of the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep; Abraham, the anguish he felt when he received the command to offer up his son Isaac; and Jacob—poor Jacob!—his tears over his lost Joseph are now all wiped away; all their misdeeds, honest men, for ever put out from the book of remembrance by the love, the precious blood of Him who has forgiven them all their trespasses. The loftiest imagination, in its finest hours, has not even touched the threshold of the happiness of such a group, with all the tenderness of the past, and all the brightness of the future, mingling in the newness, the safety, the joy, the triumph, and the assurance of the present."

Wordsworth asks concerning old Matthew, in the *Lyrical Ballads*—

> Are these two lines of glittering gold
> All that must remain of thee?

Alas! a few golden sentences, beautiful, and scattered as the light yellow clouds of a bright but broken evening sky, are all that must remain of the gifted John Jameson. Nevertheless, he sleeps well, careless of the sneer of those beings who, before and after his death, called him *mad* (yes, he and all such *are*, and their asylum *is* heaven!)—uninjured, too, by the fearful earthquakes which are seeking to shake the simple-minded belief which (like the name of Calais on Queen Mary's heart) was written on *his*, and in the "sure and certain hope" of a blessed resurrection. He was taken away in time, for he was not a man either to brave, or to master, or to yield to the current of an age like this, where, one on the side, we find an earnest, fierce, and aggressive one-eyed Denial; on another, a half-belief seeking to drown its doubts amid the clatter of a well-organised machinery; on a third, an impudent dishonesty, which affects to deny the testimony of its own eyes, and cries out, "Peace, peace," when it knows full well that peace there is none; on a fourth, a vague eclecticism, which seeks to blend elements which are utterly unreconcilable, and would make Christianity only an "idea," and here and there a few (among whom now Jameson would probably have been numbered), who, sick of systematising, and refining, and compromising, and winking at plain and palpable facts, and of cowardly retreat

into the past, are looking upward and forward to the hills and the heavens, and expecting new life to religion from its old source. But better for him, and perhaps also for us, that he lies quiet and calm near his dear wife, and some of his children, in the kirkyard of Methven; for, although one of the gentlest and most gifted of the taught at the feet of Jesus, he wanted many of the elements the world now demands from its teachers, from those whose voices would pierce with authority through the clamours of an age " when the nations are angry," and when, it may be, the time, too, of the " dead, that they may be judged," is drawing near.

We like to recall little traits and looks of the dear old man; his grey hairs—the benevolence struggling in every feature—the tenderness of his private tones—the loud energy with which he *sang* at family worship, especially when the sentiment was peculiarly poetic—his gentleness to his children—the funny stories he delighted to tell—the " hints to painters " he often gave in the course of conversation, sometimes ending in the wish, " If I had but the finger! "—his recital of his own experiences, adventures, and *dreams*—his generous bursts of admiration for books and men—are all carefully treasured in our heart, " to go no more out." And, when " sick of the present, we turn to the past," or, at least, feel that we have fallen among a race of little men, with little objects, little successes, *little* sorrows, and *little* sins, his image rises to our memory as that of one of the uncrowned princes and unappreciated moral giants among our kind.

Note.—Since this was written, we have prefaced a third edition of Jameson's *Remains*, rendered valuable by two additional sermons, of much merit, from his pen, on the " Conversion of Paul."

PROFESSOR WILSON[1]

In our paper on Alexander Smith, we said that there was something exceedingly sweet and solemn in the emotions with which we watch the uprise of a new and true poet. And we now add, that exceedingly sad and solemn are the feelings with which we regard the downgoing and departure of a great old bard. We have analogies with which to compare the first of these events, such as the one we selected—that of the appearance of a new star in the heavens. But we have no analogy for the last, for we have never yet seen a star or sun *setting for ever*. We have seen the orb trembling at the gates of the west, and dipping reluctantly in the ocean; but we knew that he was to appear again, and take his appointed place in the firmament, and this forbade all sadness except such as is always interwoven with the feeling of the sublime. But were the nations authentically apprised that on a certain evening the sun was to go down to rise no more, what straining of eyes, and heaving of hearts, and shedding of tears would there be!—what climbing of loftiest mountains to get the last look of his beams!—what a shriek, loud and deep, would arise when the latest ray had disappeared!—how many would, in despair and misery, share in the death of their luminary!—what a "horror of great darkness" would sink over the earth when he had departed!—and how would that horror be increased by the appearance of the fixed stars,

Distinct, but distant—clear, but ah, how cold!

which in vain came forth to gild the gloom and supply the blank left by the departed king of glory! With some such emotions as are suggested by this supposition, do men witness the departure of a great genius. His immortality they may firmly believe in; but what is it to them? He has gone, they know, to other spheres, but has ceased to be a source of light, and warmth, and cheerful genial influence to theirs for ever and ever. Just as his life alone deserved the name of *life*—native, exuberant, overflowing life—so his death alone is worthy of the name—the blank, total, terrible name of death. The place of the majority of men can easily be supplied, nay, is never left

[1] From *A Third Gallery of Literary Portraits*, 1854

empty; but his cannot be filled up in *sæcula sæculorum*. Hence men are sometimes disposed, with the ancient poets, to excuse the heavens of envy in removing the great spirit from among them. But the grief becomes profounder still when the departed great one was the last representative of a giant race—the last monarch in a dynasty of mind. Then there seem to die over again in him all his intellectual kindred; then, too, the thought arises, who is to succeed?—and in the shadow of his death-bed youthful genius appears for a time dwindled into insignificance, and we would willingly pour out all the poetry of the young age as a libation on his grave.

Such emotions, at least, are crossing our minds as we contemplate the death of Christopher North, and remember that he was one of the last of those mighty men—the Coleridges, Wordsworths, Byrons, Campbells, Shelleys—who cast such a lustre on the literature and poetry of the beginning of the century. They have dropped away star by star, and not above two or three of the number continue now to glimmer: they can hardly be said to shine.

Wilson's death had been long expected, and yet it took the public by surprise. It seemed somehow strange that such a man could die. The words, "Death of Professor Wilson," seemed paradoxical, so full was he of the riotous and overflowing riches of bodily and of mental being; and the exclamation "Impossible," we doubt not, escaped from the lips of many who could not think of him except as moving along in the pride of his magnificent personality—a walking world of life.

We propose, while his grave is yet green, throwing a frail chaplet upon it, in addition to our former tribute, which, we are proud to say, was not rejected or despised by the great man to whom it was paid. We mean, first, to sketch rapidly the events of his history, and then to speak of his personal appearance, his character, his genius in its native powers and aptitudes, his achievements as a critic, humorist, writer of fiction, professor, poet, and periodical writer; his relation to his age; his influence on his country; and the principal defects in his character and genius.

We may premise, that in the following outline of his life we pretend to do nothing except state a few facts concerning him which are generally known. His full story must be told by others; if, indeed, it shall ever be fully told at all.

John Wilson was born in Paisley in the year 1785. We once, indeed, heard a sapient bailie, in a speech at a Philosophical

soiree in Edinburgh, call him a "native of the Modern Athens," but, although the statement was received with cheers, and although the worthy dignitary might have had sources of information peculiar to himself on the subject, we are rather inclined to hold by the general notion that he was a Paisley *body*, with a universal soul. In Paisley they still show the house where he was born, and are justly proud of the chief among their many native poets. No town in Scotland, in proportion to its size, has produced more distinguished men than Paisley—Tannahill, Alexander Wilson, Motherwell (who spent his boyhood and youth, at least, in Paisley), and Christopher North, are only a few of its poetic sons. Wilson's father was a wealthy manufacturer in the town; his mother was a woman of great good sense and piety, and he imbibed from her a deep sense of religion. Paisley is a dull town in itself, but is surrounded by many points of interest. Near it is the hole in the canal where poor Tannahill drowned himself; farther off are the Braes of Gleniffer, commemorated in one of the same poet's songs. The river Cart—a river sung by Campbell—runs through the town, after passing through some romantic moorlands. Mearns Muir is not far away—a muir sprinkled with lochs, which Wilson has often described in his articles in *Blackwood*, and on the remoter outskirts of which stands the farmhouse where Pollok was born, and whence he saw daily the view so picturesquely reproduced by him in the *Course of Time*, of

> Scotland's northern battlement of hills.

All these were early and favourite haunts of Wilson, who appears to have been what is called in Scotland a "royd" boy (roystering), fond of nutting, cat-shooting, fishing, and orchard-robbing expeditions; the head of his class in the school, and the leader of every trick and mischief out of it. At an early age he was sent to the Highlands, to the care of Dr. Joseph MacIntyre of Glenorchy, an eminent clergyman of the Church of Scotland, who, besides multifarious labours as a minister and a farmer, found time to superintend an academy for boarders. Our worthy father knew him well, and told us some curious traits of his character. He was a pious, laborious, intelligent, and, at the same time, a shrewd, knowing, somewhat close-fisted old *carle*. To his care Wilson, then a loose-hanging, tall, thin, bright-eyed boy, was sent by his father, and the doctor was very kind to him. He spent his holidays in rambling among the black mountains which surround the

head of Loch Lomond, sailing on the lake, conversing with the shepherds, and picking up local traditions, which, on his return to the manse, he used to repeat to the doctor with such eloquence and enthusiasm, that the old man, his eyes now filled with tears, and now swimming with laughter, said again and again, "My man, you should write story-books." Wilson told us that this advice rang in his ears till it set him to writing the *Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life*. So let us honour the memory of the good old Oberlin of Glenorchy, whenever we read those immortal sketches. MacIntrye also (who, though an eccentric and pawky, was a truly good man) did, we believe, not a little to rivet on the poet's mind the religious advices and instructions of his mother. It was probably owing to this, too, that Wilson displays in all his writings such a respect for the clerical character, and uniformly uses the word "manse" as if it were the word *home*.

From the school at Glenorchy he was sent to the University of Glasgow, which then mustered a very admirable staff of professors, as well as a noble young race of rising students. There was (a relative of our own, by the way) Richardson, Professor of Latin, a highly accomplished scholar and elegant writer, but whose works seem now in a great measure forgotten. There was Jardine of the Logic, a man of great industry, method, communicative gift, and fatherly interest in his students; in fact, as Lord Jeffrey and many others of his eminent pupils confessed, one of the best of conceivable teachers. There was Millar, the eminent writer on the Laws of Nations. And there was Young of the Greek chair, a man of burning enthusiasm, as well as of vast erudition, whose readings and comments on Homer made his students thrill and weep by turns. Our readers will find a glowing picture of him in *Peter's Letters*. The prelections of these men must have tended mightily to develop the mind of Wilson. He was benefited, too, by intimacy with many distinguished contemporary students. There was—a little later in the classes, but still contemporaneous—Lockhart, afterwards his associate in many a fair and many a foul-foughten field of letters. There was Michael Scott, author of *Tom Cringle's Log*, who became a West Indian merchant, but returned to his native city, Glasgow, and wrote those striking naval narratives, under an assumed name in *Blackwood*, without being discovered, till some little allusions to early days in one of the chapters betrayed the secret to Wilson, who cried out. "Aut Michael aut Diabolus!" his old college companion standing detected. There was a man,

since well known in Scotland, and assuredly a person of very rare gifts of natural eloquence and humour—Dr. John Ritchie, late of Potterrow, Edinburgh—who used to contend with Wilson at leaping, football, and other athletic exercises, at which both were masters, and nearly matched. And there was Thomas Campbell, with whom Wilson passed many a joyous hour, both in Glasgow, and in frequent excursions, on their holidays, or in the summer vacation, into the near Highlands, and who, in spite of diversities of taste and of politics, continued on friendly terms with him to the last.

At college, Wilson was, we believe, distinguished, as he had been at school, by irregular diligence, and by frequent fits of idleness, by expertness, when he pleased, at his studies, and by expertness at all times in games, frolics, and queer adventures. From Glasgow, he was sent to Magdalene College, Oxford, and there his character retained and deepened all its peculiar traits. He now read, and now dissipated hard, as most Oxford students of that day did. He took several college honours, and was the first boxer, leaper, cock-fighter, and runner among the students. He gained the Newdegate prize for poetry, and became in politics a Radical so flaming, that it is said he would not allow a servant to black his shoes, but might be seen—the yellow-haired, glorious savage—of a morning performing that interesting operation himself! He was contemporary with De Quincey, but they never met, at least wittingly; although we imagine the little bashful scholar must have sometimes seen, and rather shrunk, from the tall athlete, rushing like a tempest on to the yards, or parading under the arches of the old Mediæval University.

At Oxford, Wilson became acquainted with Wordsworth's poetry. It made a deep and permanent impression upon his mind. He imagined that he found in it a union of the severe grandeur of the Grecian, with the wild charm of the romantic school of poetry. It determined his bias toward subjective instead of objective song; materially, as we think, to his disadvantage. Wilson was by nature fitted to be, as a poet, a great compound of the subjective, and the subjective with the objective somewhat preponderating, but the influence of Wordsworth, counteracted only in part by that of Scott, made the subjective predominate unduly in his verse; and he who might have been almost a Shakspere, had he followed his native tendency, became, in poetry, only a secondary member of the Lake School.

When he left Oxford, he betook himself to the Lake country,

where his father had purchased the estate of Elleray, situated upon the beautiful shores of Windermere; and there became speedily intimate with Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge, and De Quincey. This last describes him as being then a tall, fresh, fine-looking youth, dressed like a sailor, and full of frankness, eccentricity, and fire. He was at that time vibrating between various schemes of life, all more or less singular. He was now projecting an excursion into the interior of Africa, for he had always a strong passion for travel, and now determining to be, for life, a writer of poetry. He contributed some fine letters to Coleridge's *Friend*, under the signature of Mathetes. A misunderstanding, however, arose between them, and they became estranged for a season. Wordsworth's overbearing dogmatism, too, was rather much for Wilson. In truth, he felt himself somewhat overcrowded, and knew in his heart that he had no right to be so, yet he continued to admire both these Lake Demiurgi, and became their most eloquent interpreter to the public.

While at Elleray, but considerably later than this (in the year 1810, we think), he met and married his amiable wife. His life previous to this had been a very romantic and adventurous one. We might recount a hundred floating stories about it, but were assured a little before his death, upon his own authority, that they were, in general, a " pack of lies; " so that we refrain from more than alluding to them. He was always, gipsy, or no gipsy —waiter, or no waiter—the gentleman, the genius, and the kind-hearted, affable man. His first poem was the " Isle of Palms," which was welcomed as a very promising slip of the Lake poetic tree, and criticised with considerable favour by Jeffrey, who showed in the article a desire to wean the young bard from his favourite school of " pond-poets." In 1814 he came to reside in Edinburgh, and was called, nominally, to the bar. We are not certain, however, if he ever had a single brief, or pled a single case. But what an apparition among the lawyers of that day, who, if Carlyle may be credited, " believed in nothing in earth, heaven, hell, or under the earth," must have been this wild-eyed and broad-shouldered enthusiast, with his long flowing locks! In 1817 *Blackwood's Magazine* was started, and shortly after, Wilson, who was now dividing his time between Edinburgh and Elleray, was added to its staff, and began that wondrous series of contributions, grave and gay, satiric and serious, mad and wise, nonsensical and profound, fierce and genial, which were destined to irradiate or torment its pages for a quarter of a century. Lockhart became his principal coadjutor, and they

both set themselves to write up Toryism, to write down the *Edinburgh Review*, to castigate the cockney school, and to illustrate the manners, and maintain the name among the nations of the earth, of "puir auld Scotland." The success of *Blackwood* was not, as seems now generally thought, instantaneous and dazzling; it was slow and interrupted; it had to struggle against great opposition, and many prejudices. It got into some disgraceful scrapes, particularly in the case of the melancholy circumstances that led to the death of poor John Scott—circumstances still somewhat shrouded in mystery, but which certainly reflected very little credit on either of the editors of "Ebony." "*Blackguard's* Magazine" was its sobriquet for many a long year, and not till Lockhart and MacGinn had left it for England, did the kindlier and better management of Wilson give it that high standing, which, under the coarse and clumsy paws of his son-in-law—the "Laureate of Clavers"—it is again rapidly losing.

Between the starting of *Blackwood* and Wilson's election to the Moral Philosophy chair, we remember nothing very special in his history, except his writing his first and last paper in the *Edinburgh Review*, which was a brilliant article on Byron's fourth canto of *Childe Harold*, and the appearance of his *City of the Plague*. From this much was expected, but it rather disappointed the public. It had beautiful passages, but, as a whole, was "dull, somehow dull." It aspired to be both a great drama and a great poem—and was neither. Two or three pages of it are still remembered, but the poem itself has gone down, or, rather, never rose.

Galled at its reception, the author mentally resolved, and he kept his resolution, to publish no more separate poems. In 1820 Dr. Thomas Brown died, and Wilson was urged by his friends, especially by Sir Walter Scott, to stand a candidate for the vacant chair of Moral Philosophy. It was desirable, they thought, that that should be filled by one who was a Conservative (Wilson had long ago renounced his Radicalism), and who had genius and mettle besides. It was thought good, too, that such a man should now have a settled position in society. His pretensions were fiercely opposed. When a boy, we fell in with a file of old *Scotsmans*, dated 1820, and assure our readers that they could scarcely credit the terms in which Wilson was then assailed. (And yet why say this, after the recent brutal assaults on his dust by the creatures of the "*Ass*-enæum," and others of the London press?) He was accused of

blasphemy, of writing indecent parodies on the Psalms, of being a turncoat, of having no original genius, of having written a bad bombastic paper in the *Edinburgh Review*, etc., etc. The *Scotsman* did not then seek to "damn with faint praise," but spoke out loud and bold. It had then, too, some *critical*, as well as much political, power. The fact was, party spirit was at that time running mountains high in Scotland, fomented greatly by the Queen's case; Wilson, besides, was as yet very little known; his poetry was not popular; his powers as a periodical writer were yet in blossom, and only his early eccentricities seemed to mark him out from the roll of common men. His opponent, Sir William Hamilton, too, was known to have devoted immense talent and research to the study of moral and mental science, while Wilson, it was shrewdly suspected, required to *cram* himself for the office. Through dint of party influence, however, he was elected; and certainly none of the numerous clan of *Job-sons* has ever done more to redeem the character of the tribe. He cast a lustre even upon the mean and rotten ladder by which he had risen.

Scott had told Wilson (see *Scott's Life*), that when elected to the chair he must "forswear sack, purge, and live cleanly like a gentleman." And on this hint he proceeded to act. He commenced to prepare his lectures with great care; and his success in the chair was such as to abash his adversaries, and astonish even his friends. He became the darling of his students; and the publication of his *Lights and Shadows*, and the *Trials of Margaret Lindsay*, contributed to raise his reputation, not only as a writer, but as a man.

He continued still to write in *Blackwood*, and when Lockhart, in 1826, went to London to edit the *Quarterly Review*, Wilson became the unrestricted lord, although not the ostensible editor, of that magazine, with the history of which for ten years he was identified. How the public did, in these days, watch and weary for each First of the Month! for sure it was to bring with it either a sunny and splendid morning of poetic eloquence, or a terrible and sublime tornado of invective and satiric power. "Who is next," was the general question, "to be crowned as by the hand of Apollo, or to be scorched as by a wafture from the torch of the Furies?" The *Noctes Ambrosianæ* especially intoxicated the world. They resembled the marvels of genius, of the stage, and of ventriloquism united to produce one bewitching and bewildering whole. The author seemed a diffused Shakspere, or Shakspere in a hurry, and with a printer's

" devil " waiting at his door. Falstaff was for a season eclipsed by the " Shepherd," and Mercutio and Hamlet together had their glories darkened by the blended wit and wisdom, pathos and fancy, of Christopher North. The power of these dialogues lay in the admirable combination, interchange, and harmonious play of the most numerous, diverse, and contradictory elements and characters. Passages of the richest and most poetical eloquence were intermixed with philosophical discussion, with political invectives, with literary criticism, with uproarious fun and nonsense, with the floating gossip of the day, and with the sharpest of small talk. The Tragedy, the Comedy, and the Farce were all there, and the farce was no *after-piece*, but intermingled with the entire body of the play. The author interrupts a description of Glencoe or Ben Nevis, to cry out for an additional sausage, and breaks away from a discussion on the origin of evil, to compound a tumbler of toddy. While De Quincey is explaining Kant's " Practical Reason," the Shepherd is grunting " glorious " over a plate of hotch-potch; and from under North, who is painting a covenanting martyrdom, Tickler suddenly withdraws the chair, and the description falls with the old man below the table. Each dialogue is in fact a miniature " Don Juan," jerking you down at every point from the highest to the lowest reaches of feeling and thought; and driving remorselessly through its own finest passages, in order to secure the effects of a burlesque oddity, compounded of the grave and the ludicrous, the lofty and the low. Each number in the series may be compared to a witch's caldron, crowded and heaving with all strange substances, the very order of which is disorganisation, but with the weird light of imagination glimmering over the chaos, and giving it a sort of unearthly unity. Verily, they are Walpurgis Nights, these *Noctes Ambrosianæ*. The English language contains nothing so grotesque as some of their ludicrous descriptions, nothing so graphic, so intense, so terrible, as some of their serious pictures; no dialogue more elastic, no criticism more subtle, no gossip more delightful, no such fine diffusion, like the broad eagle wing, and no such vigorous compression, like the keen eagle talon; but when we remember, besides, that the *Noctes* contain *all* these merits combined into a wild and wondrous whole, our admiration of the powers displayed in them is intensified to astonishment, and, if not to the pitch of saying, " Surely a greater than Shakspere is here," certainly to that of admitting a mind of cognate and scarce inferior genius.

Thus, for ten years did Wilson continue, in *Noctes*, in reviews, in pictures of Scottish scenery and life, in criticisms on Homer, and Spenser, and the other great poets of the world, with undiminished freshness and force, to disport his leviathan powers. Sport, indeed, it was, for he seldom, it is said, employed more than three or four days in the month in the preparation of his articles. When magazine-day approached, his form ceased to be seen on Princes Street, except at the stated hour when he walked to his class. He shut himself up, permitted his beard to grow, kept beside him now a tea-pot, and now a series of soda-water bottles, and poured out his brilliant extemporisations, page after page, as fast as his broad quill could move, till perhaps the half of a "Maga" is written, and for another month the lion is free. In this improvisatore fashion, it is said, he wrote his Essay on Burns within a single week. Such irregular Titanic work, however, brought its penalties along with it, and he began by and by to "weary in the greatness of his way." His gentle wife was removed, too, about this time by death from his side, and the shock was terrible. It struck him to the ground. It unstrung a man who seemed before to possess the Nemean lion's nerve. He was found at this time, by a gentleman who visited him at Lasswade, feeble, almost fatuous, miserable, and unable to do aught but weep and moan, like a heart-broken child. But the end was not yet. He recovered by a mighty bound his elasticity of mind and energy of frame. He carried on his professional labours with renewed vigour and success. He bent again the Ulysses bow of *Blackwood*, but never, it must be admitted, with the same power. His *Dies Boreales*, compared to the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, were but as the days of Shetland in January, compared to the nights of Italy or of Greece in June.

We may here appropriately introduce the reminiscences of our own intercourse with him, which indeed was very slight and occasional. We had often gone in to hear him in his class, although our curriculum of study had taken place in another university; had not been fascinated at first, but had ultimately learned enthusiastically to admire his manner of teaching—of which more afterwards. In 1834, anxious to gain a verdict from a critic so distinguished, we ventured on an experiment, at the recollection of which we yet blush. We sent him in some essays, professing to be by another. The result was of a sort we had not in our wildest dreams imagined. Suffice it that he spoke of them (without knowing their author) in a manner

which not only bound us to him for life, but cheered and encouraged us mightily at that early stage of our progress. When, years afterwards, the papers of the "First Gallery" appeared *seriatim* in the *Dumfries Herald*, Wilson was no niggard encomiast, and it was greatly owing to his kindly words that we were induced to collect them into a volume. To himself, however, we had all this while never spoken, except for a few minutes in his class-room, till we called on him in 1844, along with a friend. At first the servant was rather shy, and spoke dubiously of the visibility of the professor, but, upon our sending up our names, we heard him on the top of the stairs growling out a hearty command to admit us. In a little he appeared, and such an apparition! Conceive the tall, strong, savage-looking man, with a beard wearing a week's growth, his hair half a twelvemonth's, no waistcoat, no coat, a loose cloak flung on for the nonce, a shirt dirty, and which apparently had been dirty for days, and, to crown all, a huge cudgel in his hand. He saluted us with his usual dignified frankness, for in his undress of manner as well as of costume he was always himself; and, after asking us both to sit, and sitting down himself, he commenced instantly to converse on the subject nearest to him at the moment. He had been recently up at Loch Awe, for he loved, he said, to "see the spring come out in the Highlands." He had, besides, been visiting many of his old acquaintances there, "shepherds and parish ministers;" and then he enlarged on the character of his old friend Dr. MacIntyre. There was a full-length picture of Wilson when a boy on one side of the room, representing him as standing beside a favourite horse, and, sooth to say, somewhat "shauchly" he seemed in his juvenile form. The picture, he said, had been taken at the especial desire of his mother, and the terms in which he spoke of her were honourable to both parties. He then launched out on literary topics in his usual free but fiery style. He spoke a great deal about De Quincey, and with profound admiration. To Coleridge as a man, his feelings were less cordial. Altogether, we left deeply impressed with his affability and kindliness, as well as with his great mental powers.

We met him but once more, at Stirling, on occasion of a great literary *conversazione*, held in that town, on January 10, 1849. His coming there had been announced, but was expected by no one, as it was during the session of college. Thither, however, he came, like a splendid meteor, and was received with boundless enthusiasm. We remember, while walking along with him

from dinner to the place of meeting, that some one remarked how singular it was (fact), "that Cholera and Christopher North had entered Stirling the same day." "And I the author of the *City of the Plague*, too," was his prompt rejoinder. Never had there been such a night in Stirling, nor is there ever likely to be another such. His spirits rose, he threw his soul amidst his audience, like a strong swimmer in a full-lipped sea, touched by turns their every passion, and at last, by the simple words, rendered more powerful by the proximity of the spot, "One bloody summer-day at Bannockburn," raised them all to their feet in one storm of uncontrollable enthusiasm. More elaborate prelections from his lips we have heard, but never anything better calculated to move and melt, to thrill and carry away, and that, too, without an atom of clap-trap, a popular assembly.

We have, in common with many, seen and heard him in various other of his moods. We have seen him in the street, or in the Parliament House, or in the exhibition, surrounded three deep by acquaintances, male and female, whom he was keeping in a roar of laughter, or sometimes hushing into a little eddy of silence, which seemed startling amidst the torrent of noisy life which was rushing around. We have watched him followed at noonday, through long streets, by enthusiasts and strangers, who hung upon his steps, and did "far off his skirts adore," and have seen him *monstrari digito*, a thousand times; sometimes we have thus followed, and thus pointed him out ourselves. And we have heard him again and again in the Assembly Rooms, and in his own class-room, addressing audiences, whom he melted, electrified, subdued, exploded into mirth, or awed into solemnity, at his pleasure, while he was discovering the secret springs of beauty and sublimity, of delight and of terror, of laughter and of tears.

In 1852 he saw the necessity of resigning his chair, owing to the increasing weakness of his frame. A pension of £200 was granted him by Lord John Russell. About a year ago symptoms of decay in his mental faculties are said to have been observed. From his cottage in Lasswade he was removed to Edinburgh, and after various fluctuations, his spirit was at last mercifully released from that body which had become a "body of death," at twelve on the morning of Monday, April 3.

We come now to the second part of our task—to speak of him critically as a Man and an Author. And in looking to him as a Man, we are compelled, first, to think of that magnificent presence of his to which we have alluded often, and may allude

yet again, which ever haunts us, and all who have seen it. In the case of many, the body seems to belong to the mind; in the case of Wilson, the mind seemed to belong to the body. You were almost tempted to believe in materialism, as you saw him, so intensely did the body seem alive, so much did it appear to ray out meaning, motion, and power, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. You thought, at other times, of the first Adam—the stately man of red clay, rising from the hand of the Almighty Potter. Larger and taller men we have seen, figures more artistically framed we have seen, faces more chastely chiselled, and "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," are not uncommon; but the power and peculiarity of Wilson's body lay in the combination of all those qualities which go to form a model man. There was his stature, about six feet two inches. There were his erect port and stately tread. There was his broad and brawny chest. There was a brow—lofty, round, and broad. There were his eyes, literally flames of fire, when roused. There were a nose, mouth, and chin, expressing, by turns, firmest determination, exquisite feeling, humour of the drollest sort, and fiery rage. And flowing round his temples, but not "beneath his shoulders broad," were locks of the true Celtic yellow, reminding you of the mane worn by the ancient bison in the Deu-Caledonian forests. "You are a man," said Napoleon, when he first saw Goethe. Similar exclamations were often uttered by strangers, as they unexpectedly encountered Wilson in the streets. Johnson said of Burke, that you could not converse with him for five minutes under a shed without saying, "this is an extraordinary man." But Burke had to open his mouth; his presence was by no means remarkable. In Wilson's case there was no need for uttering a single word; his face, his eye, his port, his chest, all united in silently shining out the tidings of what he was—the most gifted, and one of the least cultured of the sons of men.

"Cultured," we mean in the ordinary sense of that word, for unquestionably he had received or given himself an education as extraordinary as was his genius. Yet there was a want of polish and finish about his look, his hair, his dress, and gesture, that seemed *outré* and savage, and which made some hypercritics talk of him as a splendid beast—a cross between the man, the eagle, and the lion. You saw at least one who had been much among the woods, and much among the wild beasts, who, like Peter Bell, had often

> Set his face against the sky,
> On mountains and on lonely moors,

who had slept for nights among the heather, who had bathed in midnight lakes, and shouted from the top of midnight hills, and robbed eagles' eyries, and made snow-men, and wooed solitude as a bride; and yet, withal, there was something in his bearing which showed the scholar, the gentleman, the man of the world, and the waggish observer; and if one presumed on his oddity, and sought to treat him as a simpleton, or semi-maniac, he could resent the presumption by throwing at him a word which withered him to the bone, or darting at him a glance which shrivelled him up into remorse and insignificance. His eye was indeed a most singular eye. Now it glittered like a sharp sunlit sword; now it assumed a dewy expression of the slyest humour; now it swam in tears; now it became dim and deep under some vision of grandeur which had come across it; now it seemed searching every heart among his hearers; and now it appeared to retire and communicate directly with his own. And woe to those against whom it did rouse in anger! It was then Cœur de Lion in the *Talisman*, with his hand and foot advanced to defend the insulted banner of England.

Indeed, we marvel that no critic hitherto has noticed the striking similitude between Wilson, and Scott's portraiture of Richard the Lion-hearted. We are almost inclined to think that Sir Walter had him in his eye. Many of their qualities were the same. The same leonine courage and nobility of nature; the same fierce and ungovernable passions; the same high and generous temper; the same love of adventure and frolic; the same taste for bouts of pleasure and lowly society; the same love of song and music; the same imprudence and improvidence; the same power of concentrating the passions of hot hearts and amorous inclinations upon their wives; and the same personal appearance to the very letter—in complexion, strength, and stature—distinguish the king and the poet. Neither Richard nor Christopher was always a hero. The former enjoyed the humours of Friar Tuck as heartily as he did the minstrelsy of Blondel; and our lion-hearted Laker could be as much at home among peasants and smugglers, as he ever was with Wordsworth and Coleridge.

We have often heard Americans preferring the personal presence of Daniel Webster to that of Wilson. Webster we never saw, but, from descriptions and portraits, we have him somewhat clearly before our mind's eye. He was in appearance a tall, solemn, swarthy, thunderous-looking Puritan clergyman, clad always in black, not unlike James Grahame of the

"Sabbath," Wilson's friend, but with a prodigiously more powerful expression on the eye and brow. He looked, in short, morally the very reverse of what he *was;* he seemed the model of a high-principled and conscientious man. Wilson's face and form were equally massive, far sunnier and far truer to his genial and unlimited nature.

As a man, Wilson was much misunderstood. Not only were his personal habits grossly misrepresented, but his whole nature was belied. He was set down by many as a strange compound of wilful oddity, boisterous spirits, swaggering ostentation, and true genius. Let us hear, on the other side, one who knew him intimately, and loved him as a son a father—our friend Thomas Aird. His words, written since Wilson's decease, are identical with all his private statements to us on the same subject:—"He was singularly modest, and even deferential. His estimates of life were severely practical; he was not sanguine; he was not even hopeful enough. Those who approached the author of the *Noctes* in domestic life, expecting exchanges of boisterous glee, soon found out their mistake. No writing for mere money, no "dabbling in the pettiness of fame," with this great spirit, in its own negligent grandeur, modest, quiet, negligent, because, amidst all the beauty and joy of the world, it stood *waiting and wondering on vaster shores than lie by the seas of time.*"

These words are not only beautiful, but true, although they represent Wilson only in his higher moods. He could, and often did, indulge in boisterous glee, while, like many humorists, his heart within was serious, if not sad enough. And this leads us to the question as to his faith—what was it? He was unquestionably of a deeply religious temperament; but he had not given it a proper culture. He was not, we think, satisfied with any of the present *forms* of the Christian religion; yet there was something in him far beyond nature-worship. His attitude, indeed, was just that described by Aird. Like the spirits of Foster, Coleridge, Arnold, and many others in our strange era, while accepting Christianity as a whole, Wilson's spirit was "waiting and wondering" till the mighty veil should drop, and show all mysteries made plain in the light of another sphere. Had he more resolutely lived the Christian life in its energetic activities, and approved himself more a servant of duty, his views had perhaps become clearer and more consoling. And yet, what can we say? Arnold was a high heroic worker, nay, seemed a humble, devoted Christian, and yet died with a

heart broken by the uncertainties of this transition and twilight age.

Many thought and called Wilson a careless, neglectful man. He was not, indeed, so punctual as the Iron Duke in answering letters, nor could he be always "fashed" with young aspirants. But this arose more from indolence than from indifference. He was to many men a generous and constant friend and patron. Few have had encouraging letters from him, but many have had cheering words, and a word from him went as far as a letter, or many letters from others.

We pass to speak of the constituents of his genius. These were distinguished by their prodigal abundance and variety. He was what the Germans call an "all-sided man." He had, contrary to common opinion, much metaphysical subtlety, which had not indeed been subjected, any more than some of his other faculties, to careful cultivation. But none can read some of his articles, or could have listened to many of his lectures, without the conviction that the metaphysical power was strong within him, and that, had he not by instinct been taught to despise metaphysics, he might have become a metaphysician, as universally wise, as elaborately ingenious, as captiously critical, as wilfully novel, and as plausibly and profoundly wrong, as any of the same class that ever lived. But he *did* despise this science of pretensions, and used to call it "dry as the dust of summer." Of his imagination we need not speak. It was large, rich, ungovernable, fond alike of the beautiful and the sublime, of the pathetic and the terrible. His wit was less remarkable than his humour, which was one of the most lavish and piquant of his faculties. Add to this, great memory, keen, sharp intellect, wide sympathies, strong passion, and a boundless command of a somewhat loose, but musical and energetic diction, and you have the outline of his gifts and endowments. He was deficient only in that plodding, painstaking sagacity which enables many commonplace men to excel in the physical sciences. If he ever crossed the "Ass' Bridge," it must have been at a flying leap, and with recalcitrating heels, and he was much better acquainted, we suspect, with the "Fluxions" of the Tweed, than with those of Leibnitz and Newton.

His powers have never, we think, found an adequate development. It is only the bust of Wilson we have before us. Yet let us not, because he has not done mightier things, call his achievements small; they are not only very considerable in

themselves, but of a very diversified character. He was a critic, humorist, writer of fiction, professor, poet, and periodical writer. And, first, as a critic, criticism with him was not an art or an attainment: it was an insight and an enthusiasm. He loved everything that was beautiful in literature, and abhorred all that was false and affected, and pitied all that was weak and dull; and his criticism was just the frank, fearless, and eloquent expression of that love, that abhorrence, and that pity. Hence his was a catholic criticism; hence his canons were not artificial; hence he abhorred the formal, the mystical, and the pseudo-philosophic schools of criticism; hence the reasons he gave for his verdicts were drawn, not from arbitrary rules, but directly from the great principles of human nature. With what joyous gusto did he approach a favourite author! His praise fell on books like autumn sunshine, and whatever it touched it gilded and glorified. And when, on the other hand, he was disgusted or offended, with what vehement sincerity, with what a noble rage, with what withering sarcasm, or with what tumultuous invective, did he express his wrath. His criticisms are sometimes rambling, sometimes rhapsodical, sometimes overdone in praise or in blame; often you are compelled to differ from his opinions, and sometimes to doubt if they are fully formed in his own mind, and in polish, precision, and depth, they are inferior to a few others; but, in heartiness, eloquence, variety, consummate ease of motion, native insight, and sincerity, they stand alone.

We have alluded to his extraordinary gift of humour. It was not masked and subtle, like Lamb's; it was broad, rich, bordering on farce, and strongly impregnated with imagination. It was this last characteristic which gave it its peculiar power, as Patrick Robertson can testify. This gentleman possesses nearly as much fun as Wilson, but, in their conversational contests, Wilson, whenever he lifted up the daring wing of imagination, left him floundering far behind.

Good old Dr. MacIntyre, we have seen, thought Wilson's *forte* was fiction. We can hardly concur with the doctor in this opinion, for although many of his tales are fine, they are so principally from the poetry of the descriptions which are sprinkled through them. He does not tell a story well, and this because he is not calm enough. As Cowper says, he prefers John Newton, as a historian, to Gibbon and Robertson; because, while they *sing*, you *say* your story; and history is a thing to be said, not sung. Before we met this remark, we had *made* it

in reference to Wilson and Scott. Scott *says* his stories, and Wilson *sings* them. Hence, while Wilson in passages is equal to Scott, as a whole, his works of fiction are greatly less interesting, and seem less natural. Wilson is a northern Scald, not so much narrating as pouring out passionate poetic rhapsodies, thinly threaded with incident; Scott is a Minstrel of the border, who can be poetical when he pleases, but who lays more stress upon the general interest of the tale he tells. Even in description he is not, in general, equal to Scott, and that for a similar reason. Wilson, when describing, rises out of the sphere of prose into a kind of poetic rhythm; Scott never goes beyond the line which separates the style of lofty prose from that of absolute poetry. Wilson is too Ossianic in his style of narration and description; and had he attempted a novel in three or four volumes, it had been absolutely illegible. Even *Margaret Lindsay*, his longest tale, rather tires before the close through its sameness of eloquence and monotony of pathos; only very short letters should be *all* written in tears and blood. And his alternations of gay and grave are not so well managed in his tales as in his *Noctes*. Yet nothing can be finer than some of his individual scenes and pictures. Who has forgotten his Scottish sunset, which seems dipped in fiery gold, or that rainbow which bridges over one of his most pathetic stories, or the drowning of Henry Needham, or the elder's death-bed, or that incomparable thunderstorm, which seems still to bow its giant wing of gloom over Ben Nevis and the glen below? In no modern, not even Scott, do we find prose passages so gorgeous, so filled with the intensest spirit of poetry, and rising so finely into its language and rhythm as these.

We have of late frequently applied, to apparently fine prose writing, the test of reading it aloud, and have judged accordingly of its rhythm, as well as of its earnestness and power. Few authors, indeed, can stand this. MacCall of Manchester's high-wrought paragraphs seem miserably verbose and empty when read aloud; Hamilton of Leeds' sentences are too short and disjointed to stand this test; and even Ruskin's most sounding and laboured passages assume an aspect of splendid disease, of forced and factitious enthusiasm, when thus tried. All the better passages, on the other hand, of Hall, Chalmers, Foster, Scott, Croly, De Quincey, and, we add, of Macaulay, triumphantly pass the ordeal; and so, too, the descriptions in the *Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life*.

"Come back into memory, thou most brilliant and genial

of all professors, as we have seen thee in the days of other years!" We enter the class-room, and take, we shall suppose, the most remote seat in the sloping array of benches. We find ourselves surrounded by youths of all varieties of appearance and diversities of standing, waiting, some eagerly, others with an air of perfect indifference, for the entrance of the professor. Yonder two are discussing the question whether Wilson be a real Christian, or a true poet. One is preparing his pencil for making a caricature of his illustrious teacher; and another is mending his pen for the purpose of taking down notes of the lecture. A few are knocking their heels against the ground, because the morning is cold, and, perhaps, in a loud whisper discussing the merits of the leading "star" in the Royal Theatre, where they had been over night. Here and there you see strangers—some enthusiastic youths from England, or some clerical-looking gentlemen from the North of Scotland—whose fidgety air tells you that they are wearying for the appearance of the lion, and who seem regarding his class with feelings of unmixed contempt. At last you hear a certain bustle, and immediately after, there comes rushing along from the left-hand side a tall, yellow-haired man, in a gown, who steps up to the platform, and turns toward you eyes, a brow, a cheek, a chin, a chest, and a port, which instantly stamp him a Titan among the children of men. His hair rolls down his temples like a cataract of gold; his eyes are light-blue, sparkling, and at times so fierce, that they seem two loopholes opening into a brain of fire; his cheek is flushed by exercise and air into a rich manly red; his chin is cut like that of a marble Antinous; his chest is broad and ample, and seems ready either as a bulwark to break, or as a floodgate to let forth strong emotion; his lips are firmly set, yet mild; the aspect of the lower face is that of peach-like bloom, and peach-like peace, the aspect of the upper is that of high, rapt enthusiasm, like that of Apollo, looking up after the path of one of his sunny arrows; the port is erect, yet not haughty—high, yet not overbearing or contemptuous—and, ere he has opened his lips, you say internally, "I have found a man of the old heroic breed, strength, and stature." He begins his lecture. For a little you are disappointed. His voice is deep, but seems monotonous; his utterance is slow; his pronunciation is peculiar; his gesture uncouth; what he says, is a rather confused and embarrassed repetition of a past lecture; and you are resigning yourself to a mere passive and wondering gaze at the *personnel* of the man, expecting nothing from his

mouth, when the progress of his discussion compels him to quote a few lines of poetry, and then his enthusiasm appears, not rapidly bursting, but slowly defiling like a great army into view, his eye kindles, enlarges, and seems to embrace the whole of his audience in one glance, his chest heaves, his arms vibrate, sometimes his clenched hand smites the desk before him, and his tones deepen and deepen down into abysses of pathos and melody, as if searching for the very soul of sound, to bring it into upper air. And, after thus having arrested you, he never for an instant loses his grasp, but, by successive shock after shock of electric power, roll after roll of slow thunder, he does with you what he wills, as with his own, and leaves you in precisely the state in which you feel yourself when awakening from some deep, delightful dream. He had, besides, certain great field-days, as a lecturer, in which, from beginning to end, he spoke with sustained and accelerating power: as when he advocated the immortality of the soul; described the sufferings of Indian prisoners; explained his ideas of the beautiful; or described the character of the miser. The initiated among the students used to watch and weary for these grand occasions, and all who heard him then, felt that genius and eloquence could go no further, and that they were standing beside him on the pinnacle of intellectual power.

His poetry proper has been generally thought inferior to his prose, and beneath the level of his powers. Yet, if we admire it less, we at times love it more. It is not great, or intense, or highly impassioned, but it is true, tender, and pastoral. It has been well called the "poetry of peace;" it is from "towns and toils remote." In it the author seems to be exiled from the bustle and conflict of the world, and to inhabit a country of his own, not an entirely "Happy Valley," for tears there fall, and clouds gather, and hearts break, and death enters, but the tears are quiet, the clouds are windless, the hearts break in silence, and the awful shadow comes in softly, and on tiptoe departs. Sometimes, indeed, the solitude and silence are disturbed by the apparition of a "wild deer," and the poet is surprised into momentary rapture, and a stormy lyric is flung abroad on the winds. But, in general, the region is calm, and the very sounds are all in unison and league with silence. As a poet, however, Wilson was deficient, far more than as a prose writer, in objective interest, as well as in concentration of purpose. His poetry has neither that reflective depth which causes you to recur so frequently to the poetry of Wordsworth,

nor that dazzling lightness and brilliance of movement which fascinates you in Scott. It is far, too, from being a full reflection of his multifarious and powerful nature; it represents only a little quiet nook in his heart, a small sweet vein in his genius, as though a lion were to carry somewhere within his broad breast a little bag of honey, like that of the bee. It does not discover him as he is, but as he would wish to have been. His poetry is the Sabbath of his soul. And there are moods of mind —quiet, peaceful, autumnal moments—in which you enjoy it better than the poetry of any one else, and find a metaphor for its calm and holy charm in the words of Coleridge—

> The moonbeams *steep'd in silentness*,
> The *steady weather-cock*.

The revolving, impatient wheel, the boundless versatility of Wilson's genius, quieted and at rest, as we see it in his poetry, could not be better represented than in these lines. In Coleridge, indeed, as in some true poets, we find all characters and varieties of intellect represented *unconsciously and by anticipation*, even as frost, fire, and rock-work—each contains all architecture and all art, silently anticipated in its varied forms and prophetic imitations.

In his periodical writings alone do we find anything like an adequate display of his varied powers. You saw only the half-man in the professor's chair, and only the quarter-man in his poetry; but in the *Noctes*, and the satirico-serious papers he scattered over *Blackwood*, you saw the whole Wilson—the Cyclops now at play, and now manufacturing thunderbolts for Jove; now cachinnating in his cave, now throwing rocks and mountains at his enemies, and now pouring out awful complaints, and asking strange, yet reverent queries in the ear of the gods.

Wilson's relation to his age has been, like Byron's, somewhat uncertain and vacillating. He has been, on the whole, a "lost leader." He has, properly speaking, belonged neither to the old nor new, neither to the conservative nor to the movement, neither to the infidel nor the evangelical sides. Indeed, our grand quarrel with him is, that he was not sufficiently in earnest; that he did not with his might what his hand found to do; that he hid his *ten* talents in a napkin; that he trifled with his inestimable powers, and had not a sufficiently strong sense of stewardship on his conscience. This has been often said, and we thought it generally agreed on, till our attention was turned to a pamphlet, entitled "Professor Wilson—a

Memorial and Estimate," which, amid tolerably good points and thoughts here and there, is written in a style which, for looseness, inaccuracy, verbosity, and affected obscurity, baffles description, besides abounding in flagrant and, we fear, wilful misstatements, and in efforts at fine writing, which make you blush for Scottish literature. The poor creature who indites this farrago of pretentious nonsense, asserts that the "Life of Wilson seems to have been as truly fruitful as that of any author within the range of English literature," and proves the statement by the following portentous query: "That *wild air* of the unexpressed poet, the inglorious Milton, the Shakspere that might have been, what was it but a *rich spice* of the fantastic humour of the man, a part of that extraordinary character which so delighted in its sport, that, whether he jested on himself, or from behind a mask might be making some play of you, you knew not, nor were sure if it meant mirth, confidence, or a solemn earnest such as *he* only could appreciate?" What this may mean we cannot tell; but the writer becomes a little more intelligible when he speaks, in some later portion of his production, of the great popularity which Wilson's redacted and collected works are to obtain, not appearing to know the fact, that the *Recreations of Christopher North*, published some twelve years ago, have never reached a second edition, and that old William Blackwood, one of the acutest bibliophiles that ever lived, refused to re-publish Wilson's principal articles in *Maga;* nor did the *Recreations* appear till after Blackwood's death. Splendid passages and inestimable thoughts, of course, abound in all that Wilson wrote, but the want of pervasive purpose, of genuine artistic instinct, of condensation, and of finish, has denied true unity, and perhaps permanent power, to his writings. He will probably be best remembered for his *Lights and Shadows*—a book which, although not a full discovery of his powers, lies in portable compass, and embalms that fine nationality which so peculiarly distinguished his genius. Probably a wise selection from his *Noctes*, too, might become a popular book.

Wilson had every inducement to have done more than he did. He was of a strong healthy nature; he had much leisure; he had great, perhaps too great facility of expression. He was the pet of the public for many years. But he did not, alas! live habitually in his "great Taskmaster's eye." We quarrel not with his unhappy uncertainties of mind; they are but too incident to all imaginative and thoughtful spirits. We quarrel not with his "waiting and wondering" on the brink of the un-

seen, but his uncertainty should not have paralysed and emasculated a man of his gigantic proportions. If beset by doubts and demons, he ought to have tried at least to fight his way through them, as many a resolute spirit has done before him. What had he to endure, compared to Cowper, who for many years imagined that a being, mightier than the fallen angels—Ahrimanes himself—held him as his property, and yet who, under the pressure of this fearful delusion, wrote and did his best, and has left some works which, while satisfying the severest critics, are manuals and household words everywhere? Wilson, on the other hand, seldom wrote anything except from the compulsion of necessity. Although not a writer for bread, much of his writing arose to the tune of the knock of the printer's "devil;" and his efforts for the advancement of the race, although we believe really sincere, were to the last degree fluctuating, irregular, and uncertain.

It is a proof, we think, of Wilson's weakness, as well as of his power, that he has been claimed as a possible prize on so many and such diverse sides. He might have been, says one, the greatest preacher of the age. He might have been, says another, the greatest actor of the day. He might have been, says a third, the greatest dramatist, next to Shakspere, that ever lived. He might have been, says a fourth, a powerful parliamentary orator. He might have been, says a fifth, a traveller superior to Bruce or Park. Now, while this proves the estimation in which men hold his vast versatility, it proves also, that there was something wrong and shattered in the structure of a mind which, while presenting so many angles to so many objects, never fully embraced any of them, and while displaying powers so universal, has left results so comparatively slender.

Nevertheless, after all these deductions, where shall we look for his like again? A more generous, a more wide-minded, a more courteous, and a more gifted man, probably never lived. By nature he was Scotland's brightest son, not, perhaps, even excepting Burns; and he, Scott, and Burns, must rank everlastingly together as the first Three of her men of genius. A cheerless feeling of desolation creeps across us, as we remember —that majestic form shall press this earth no more; those eyes of fire shall sound human hearts no more; that voice, mellow as that of the summer ocean breaking on a silver strand, shall swell and sink no more; and that large heart shall no more mirror nature and humanity on its stormy, yet sunlit surface.

Yet long shall Scotland, ay, and the world, continue to cherish his image, and to bless his memory; and whether or not he obtain a splendid mausoleum, he will not require it, for he can (we heard him once quote the words in reference to Scott, as he only could quote them)

> A mightier monument command—
> The mountains of his native land.

A CLUSTER OF NEW POETS[1]

SYDNEY YENDYS

THIS book[2] we hesitate not to pronounce the richest volume of recent poetry next to *Festus*. It is a "wilderness" of thought—a sea of towering imagery and surging passion. Usually a man's first book is his richest, containing, as it generally does, all the good things which had been accumulating in his portfolio for years before he published. But while *The Roman* was full of beauties, *Balder* is overflowing, and the beauties, we think, are of a rarer and profounder sort. There was much poetry in *The Roman*, but there was more rhetoric. Indeed, many of the author's detractors, while granting him powers of splendid eloquence, denied him the possession of the purely poetic element. *Balder* must, unquestionably, put these to silence, and convince all worth convincing, that Yendys is intensely and transcendently a poet.

In two things only does *Balder* yield to *The Roman*. It has, as a story, little interest, being decidedly subjective rather than objective; and, secondly, its writing is not, as a whole, so clear. In *The Roman*, he was almost always distinctly, dazzlingly clear. The Monk was never in a mist for a moment; but Balder, as he has a Norse name, not unfrequently speaks or bellows from the centre of northern darkness. We speak, we must say, however, after only one reading; perhaps a second may serve to clear up a good deal that seems obscure and chaotic.

The object of the poet is to show that natural goodness, without the divine guidance, is unable to conduct even the loftiest of the race to any issue but misery and despair. This he does in the story of Balder—a man of vast intelligence, and aspiring to universal intellectual power—who, partly through the illness of his wife, represented as the most amiable of women, and partly through his own unsatisfied longings of soul, is reduced to absolute wretchedness, and is left sacrificing her life to his

[1] From *A Third Gallery of Literary Portraits*, 1854.
[2] *Balder*. By the Author of *The Roman*.

disquietude and baffled ambition. The poem has one or two interlocutors besides Balder and Amy, but consists principally of soliloquies uttered and songs sung by these two in alternate scenes, and has very little dramatic interest. It is entitled *Balder, Part First;* a title which pretty broadly hints that a second poem—with a far sublimer argument (the inevitable sequel of the former), showing how, since natural goodness fails in reforming the world, or making any man happy, divine goodness must be expected to perform the work—may be looked for.

We pass from the general argument and bearing of the poem, to speak more in detail of its special merits and defects. The great merit of the book, as we have already hinted, is its Australian wealth of thought and imagery. Bailey must look after his laurels; Tennyson, Smith, and Bigg are all in this one quality eclipsed by Yendys. Nor are the pieces of gold small and of little value; many of them are large nuggets—more precious than they are sparkling. Here, for instance, is a cluster of noble similitudes, reminding you of Jeremy Taylor's thick rushing "So have I seen:"—

> Nature from my birth
> Confess'd me, as one who in a multitude
> Confesseth her beloved, and makes no sign;
> Or as one all unzoned in her deep haunts,
> If her true love come on her unaware,
> Hastes not to hide her breast, nor is afraid;
> Or as a mother, 'mid her sons, displays
> The arms their glorious father wore, and, kind,
> In silence, with discerning love commits
> Some lesser danger to each younger hand,
> But to the conscious eldest of the house
> The naked sword; or as a sage, amid
> His pupils in the peopled portico,
> Where all stand equal, gives no precedence,
> But by intercalated look and word,
> Of equal seeming, wise but to the wise,
> Denotes the favour'd scholar from the crowd;
> Or as the keeper of the palace-gate
> Denies the gorgeous stranger, and his pomp
> Of gold, but at a glance, although he come
> In fashion as a commoner, unstarr'd,
> Lets the prince pass.

By what a strong, rough, daring figure does Balder describe the elements of his power:—

> Thought, Labour, Patience,
> And a strong Will, that, being *set to boil*
> *The broth of Hecate, would shred his flesh*
> *Into the caldron, and stir deep, with arms*

Flay'd to the seething bone, ere there default
One tittle from the spell—these should not strive
In vain!
The repose
Of Beauty—where she lieth bright and still
As some spent angel, dead-asleep in light
On the most heavenward top of all this world,
Wing-weary.

Of what follows death he says—

The *first, last secret all men hear, and none*
Betray.
My hand shakes;
But with the trembling eagerness of him
Who buys an Indian kingdom with a bead.

Fancy, like the image that our boors
Set by their kine, doth milk her of her tears,
And loose the terrible unsolved distress
Of tumid Nature.

Men of drug and scalpel still are men.
I call them the gnomes
Of science, miners who scarce see the light,
Working within the bowels of the world
Of beauty.
Love
Makes us all poets——
From the mount
Of high transfiguration you come down
Into your common lifetime, as the diver
Breathes upper air a moment ere he plunge,
And by mere virtue of that moment, lives
In breathless deeps, and dark. We poets live
Upon the height, saying, as one of old,
"Let us make tabernacles: it is good
To be here."
Dauntless Angelo,
Who drew the Judgment, in some daring hope
That, seeing it, the gods could not depart
From so divine a pattern.

Sad Alighieri, like a waning moon
Setting in storm behind a grove of bays.

The descriptions which follow, in pages 91 and 92—of Milton and Shakspere—are very eloquent, but not, it appears to us, very characteristic. They are splendid evasions of their subjects. Reading Milton is *not* like swimming the Alps, as an ocean sinking and swelling with the billows; it is rather like trying to fly to heaven, side by side with an angel who is at full speed, and does not even see his companion—so eagerly is he straining at the glorious goal which is fixing his eye, and from afar flushing his cheek. Nor do we much admire this:—

Either his muse
Was the recording angel, or that hand

Cherubic which fills up the Book of Life,
Caught what the last relaxing gripe let fall
By a death-bed at Stratford, and henceforth
Holds Shakspere's pen.

No, no, dear Sydney Yendys, Shakspere was no cherub, or seraph either; he was decidedly an "earth spirit," or rather, he was just honest, play-acting, ale-drinking Will of Stratford, with the most marvellous daguerreotypic brow that ever man possessed, and with an immense fancy, imagination, and subtle, untrained intellect besides. He knew well a "Book of Life;" but it was not "the Lamb's!"—it was the book of the wondrous living, loving, hating, maddening, laughing, weeping heart of man. Call him rather a diver than a cherub, or, better still, with Hazlitt and Scott, compare him to that magician in the eastern tale who had the power of *shooting his soul* into all other souls and bodies, and of looking at the universe through *all human* eyes. We are, by this comparison of Shakspere to an angel, irresistibly reminded of Michael Lambourne in *Kenilworth*, who, after in vain trying to enact Arion, at last tears off his vizard, and cries "Cog's bones!" He was none of Arion, or Orion, either, but honest Mike Lambourne, that had been drinking her Majesty's health from morning till midnight. Lambourne was just as like Orion, or his namesake the archangel Michael, as Shakspere like a cherubic recorder.

Now for another cluster of minor, but exquisite, beauties, ere we come to give two or three superb passages:—

Sere leaf, that quiverest through the sad-still air;
Sere leaf, that waverest down the sluggish wind;
Sere leaf, that whirlest on the autumn gust,
Free in the ghastly anarchy of death:
The sudden gust that, *like a headsman wild,*
Uplifteth beauty by her golden hair,
To show the world that she is dead indeed.

The bare hill top
Shines near above us; I feel like a child
Nursed on his grandsire's knee, *that longs to stroke*
The bald bright forehead; shall we climb?

She look'd in her surprise
As when the Evening Star, *ta'en unaware,*
While *fearless she pursues across the Heaven*
Her Lover-Sun, and on a *sudden stands*
Confest in the pursuit, before a world
Upgazing, in her maiden innocence
Disarms us, and so looks, that she becomes
A worship evermore.

The order'd pomp and sacred dance of things.

This is that same hour
That I have seen before me as a star

Seen from a rushing comet through the black
And forward night, which orbs, and orbs, and orbs,
Till that which was a shining spot in space
Flames out between us and the universe,
And burns the heavens with glory.

We quoted his description of Night once before from MS. We give it again, however:—

And lo! the last strange sister, but though last,
Elder and haught, called Night on earth, in heaven
Nameless, for in her far youth she was given,
Pale as she is, to pride, and did bedeck
Her bosom with innumerable gems.
And God He said, " Let no man look on her
For ever; " and, begirt with this strong spell,
The Moon in her wan hand, she wanders forth,
Seeking for some one to behold her beauty;
And wheresoe'er she cometh, eyelids close,
And the world sleeps.

This description has been differently estimated. Some have called it magnificent, and others fantastic; some a matchless gem, and others a colossal conceit. But we think there can be but one opinion about the following picture of Evening. It seems to us as exquisitely beautiful as anything in Spenser, Wordsworth, or Shelley:—

And seest thou her who *kneeleth clad in gold*
And *purple*, with a *flush upon her cheek*,
And upturn'd eyes, *full of the love and sorrow*
Of other worlds? 'Tis said, that when the sons
Of God did walk the earth, she *loved a star.*

Here the description should have stopped, and here we stop it wishing that the author had. But it is curious and characteristic, not so much of the genius as of the temperament (or rather of bodily sufferings influencing that temperament) of this gifted poet, that he often sinks and falls on the very threshold of perfection. Another word, and all were gained, to the very measure and stature of Miltonic excellence; but the word comes not, or the wrong word comes instead; and as Yendys, like the tiger, takes no second spring, the whole effect is often lost. We notice the same in Shelley, Keats, and especially in Leigh Hunt, who has made and spoiled many of the finest poetic pictures in the world. Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Alexander Smith, are signal in this, that all their set descriptions and pet passages are finished to the last trembling articulation; complete even to a comma. Yendys has, perhaps, superior, or equal genius; he has also an equal will and desire to elaborate; but, alas! while the spirit is always willing, the flesh is often weak.

Speaking of the Resurrection to Amy, Balder says:—

> My childhood's dream. Is it a dream? For thou
> Art such a thing as one might think to see
> Upon a footstone, *sitting in the sun,*
> Beside a *broken grave.*
>
> I have been like
> A prophet fallen on his prostrate face
> Upon the hill of fire.

Such is the prophet above. Mark him now, as he comes down to mankind:—

> In the form
> Of manhood I will get me down to man!
> As one goes down from Alpine top with snows
> Upon his head, I, who have stood so long
> On other Alps, will go down to my race,
> *Snow'd on with somewhat out of Divine air;*
> And *merely walking* through them with a step
> God-like to music, *like the golden sound*
> Of *Phœbus' shoulder'd arrows,* I will shake
> The laden manna round me as I shake
> Dews from this morning tree.

He has, two or three pages after this, a strange effusion, called the "Song of the Sun," which we predict shall divide opinion still more than his "Night." Some will call it worthy of Goethe; others will call it a forced extravaganza, a half-frenzied imitation of Shelley's "Cloud." We incline to a somewhat intermediate notion. At the first reading, it seemed to us to bear a suspicious resemblance, not to Shelley's "Cloud," but to that tissue of noisy nonsense (where, as there was no reason, there ought at least to have been rhyme), Warren's "Lily and the Bee." Hear this, for instance. Mark, it is Sol that speaks:—

> Love, love, love, how beautiful, oh love!
> Art thou well-awaken'd, little flower?
> Are thine eyelids open, little flower?
> Are they cool with dew, oh little flower?
> Ringdove, Ringdove,
> This is my golden finger;
> Between the upper branches of the pine
> Come forth, come forth, and sing unto my day.

Who will encore the sun in such ditties as these? But he has some more vigorous strains, worthy almost of that voice wherewith Goethe, in his "Prologue to Faust," has represented him making "music to the spheres":—

> I will spend day among you like a king!
> Your water shall be wine because I reign!
> Arise, my hand is open, it is day!
> Rise! as men *strike a bell, and make it music,*
> So have I struck the earth, and made it day.

As one blows a trumpet through the valleys,
So from my golden trumpet I blow day.
White-favour'd day is sailing on the sea,
And, like a sudden harvest in the land,
The windy land is waving gold with day!
I have done my task;
Do yours. And what is this that I have given,
And wherefore? Look ye to it! As ye can,
Be wise and foolish to the end. For me,
I under all heavens go forth, praising God.

Well sung, old Baal! Thou hast become a kind of Christian in these latter days. But we have seen a far stronger, less mystic, and clearer song, attributed to thy lips before, although Yendys has not. *His*, as a whole, is not worthy either of thee or himself!

But what beautiful words are these about the sun's darling—summer—immediately below this sun-song?

Alas! that one
Should use the days of summer but to live,
And breathe but as the needful element
The strange, superfluous glory of the air!
Nor rather stand apart in awe beside
Th' untouch'd Time, and saying o'er and o'er,
In love and wonder, "These are summer-days."

We quote but one more of these random and ransomless gems:—

The Sublime and Beautiful,
Eternal twins, one dark, one fair;
She leaning on her grand heroic brother,
As in a picture of some old romaunt.

We promised next to quote one or two longer passages. We wish we had room for all the description of Chamouni, which, like the scene, is unapproachable—the most Miltonic strain since Milton—and this, because it accomplishes its sublime effects merely by sublime thought and image, almost disdaining aught but simple and colloquial words. Yet we must give a few scattered stones from this new Alp in descriptive literature—this, as yet, the masterpiece of its author's genius:—

Chamouni, 'mid sternest Alps,
The gentlest valley; bright meandering track
Of summer, when she winds among the snows
From land to land. Behold its fairest field
Beneath the bolt-scarr'd forehead of the hills
Low lying, like a heart of sweet desires,
Pulsing all day a living beauty deep
Into the sullen secrets of the rocks,
Tender as Love amid the Destinies
And Terrors; whereabout the great heights stand,
Down-gazing, like a solemn company

Of grey heads met together to look back
Upon a far-fond memory of youth.
There being old
All days and years they maunder on their thrones
Mountainous mutterings, or through the vale
Roll the long roar from startled side to side,
When whoso, lifting up his sudden voice
A moment, speaketh of his meditation,
And thinks again. There shalt thou learn to stand
One in that company, and to commune
With them, saying, "Thou, oh Alp, and thou, and thou,
And I." Nathless, proud equal, look thou take
Heed of thy peer, lest he perceive thee not—
Lest the wind blow his garment, and the hem
Crush thee, or lest he stir, and the mere dust
In the eternal folds bury thee quick.

Coleridge, in his "Hymn to Mont Blanc"—a hymn, of which it is the highest praise to say that it is equal to the subject, to Thomson's hymn at the end of *The Seasons*, to Milton's hymn put into the mouth of our first parents, and to this grand effusion of Sydney Yendys—says,

Torrents, methinks, that heard a mighty voice,
And straight stood still,
Motionless torrents—silent cataracts!

Balder has thus nobly expanded, if he ever (which we doubt) thought of, the Coleridgean image:—

The ocean of a frozen world;
A marble storm in *monumental rage*;
Passion at nought, and strength still strong in vain—
A wrestling giant, spell-bound, but not dead,
As though the universal deluge pass'd
These confines, and when forty days were o'er,
Knew the set time obedient, and arose
In haste. But Winter *lifted up his hand*,
And stay'd the everlasting sign, which strives
For ever to return. Cold crested tides,
And cataracts more white than wintry foam,
Eternally in act of the great leap
That never may be ta'en—these fill the gorge,
And rear upon the steep uplifted waves
Immovable, that proudly *feign to go*.

There follow a number of verses, striving like ante-natal ghosts for an incarnation worthy of their grandeur, but not so clearly representing the magnificent idea in the author's mind to ordinary readers as we might have wished. Yet all this dim gulf of thought and image is radiant, here and there, with poetry. But how finely this passage sweetens and softens the grandeur before and after:—

Here, in the lowest vale,
Sit we beside the torrent, till the goats
Come tinkling home at eve, with pastoral horn,

Slow down the winding way, plucking sweet grass
Amid the yellow pansies and harebells blue.
The milk is warm,
The cakes are brown;
The flax is spun,
The kine are dry;
The bed is laid,
The children sleep;
Come, husband, come
To home and me.
So sings the mother as she milks within
The chalet near thee, singing so for him
Whom every morn she sendeth forth alone
Into the waste of mountains, to return
At close of day, *like a returning soul*
Out of the Infinite: lost in the whirl
Of clanging systems, and the wilderness
Of all things, but to one remember'd tryste,
One human heart, and unforgotten cell,
True in its ceaseless self, and in its time
Restored.

There follows a fine picture of the " trouble " making cold the Alpine summits as the sun sets:—

For they do watch
The journey of the setting sun, as one
Who, when the weaker inmates of the house
Have sunk about his feet in dews and shades
Of sorrow, watches still, with brows of light
And manly eye, a brother on his way;
But when the lessening face shines no return,
Through distance slowly lengthening, and sinks slow
Behind the hill-top, nor him, looking back,
The straining sense discerns, nor the far sound
Of wheels, *stands fix'd in sudden gloom profound,*
And *thoughts more stern than woe.*

This, too, is very striking—

These fall back aghast in sight
Of everlasting Winter, where, snow-borne
In his white realm, for ever white, he sits
Invisible to men; and in his works
Gives argument of that which seen makes faint
Aspiring Nature, and his *throne a mount*
Not to be touch'd.

As the darkness deepens, the poet, resting his eye upon the vast snow of the upper hills, which alone continues visible, is reminded of a Norland legend; and with a powerful picture of it the noble strain closes:—

There was a legend wild—whisper'd at eve,
Late round the dying watchfires to awed men
In these dead seasons, whence our Danish sires—
Of the Great Arctic Ghost, the efficient power
And apparition of the frozen North,
The mystic Swan of Norna, the dread bird

Of destiny, world-wide, with roaring wings
Flapping the ice-wind, and the avalanche,
And white and terrible as polar snows—
By them unseen, behold it! through the night
Swooping from heaven, its head to earth, its neck
Down-streaming from the cloud; above the cloud,
Its great vans through a rolling dust of stars,
Thundrous descending in the rush of fate.

Our readers will notice, in these and the foregoing extracts, a vast improvement over *The Roman* in the music of the versification. The verse of *The Roman* was constructed too much on the model of Byron, who often closes and begins his lines with expletives and weak words. The verse of Yendys is much more Miltonic. We give, as a specimen of this, and as one of the finest passages in the poem, the following description of Morn:—

Lo, Morn,
When she stood forth at universal prime,
The angels shouted, and the dews of joy
Stood in the eyes of earth. While here she reign'd,
Adam and Eve were full of orisons,
And could not sin; and so she won of God,
That ever when she walketh in the world,
It shall be Eden. And around her come
The happy wonts of early Paradise.
Again the mist ascendeth from the earth,
And watereth the ground; and at the sign,
Nature, that silent saw our woe, breaks forth
Into her olden singing; near and far
The full and voluntary chorus tune
Spontaneous throats.

Once again
The heavens forget their limits, pinions bright
O'er-passing mix th' ethereal bounds with ours,
And winds of morning lead between their wings
Ambrosial odours, and celestial airs,
Warm with the voices of a better world:
Dews to the early grass, Light to the eyes,
Brooks to the murmuring hills, Spring to the earth,
Sweet winds to opening flowers, MORN to the heart.
But more than dew to grass, or light to eyes,
Or brooks to murmuring hills, or spring to earth,
Or winds to opening flowers, MORN to the heart!
Once more to live is to be happy; Life,
With *backward streaming hair, and eyes of haste,*
That look beyond the hills, doth urge no more
Her palpitating feet; her wild hair falls
Soft through the happy light upon her limbs;
She turns her wondering gaze upon herself,
Sweet saying, " It is good."

We are heal'd;
The curse falls from our eyelids; all the thorns
And thistles that do plague us, *clad in gems,*
Stand round.
All fetters break.

We are not dogs
Nail'd to a needful den, but wing'd lions,
And walk the earth from choice—the fair free earth.
The pulse of Being flows; the ills that ran
Along her veins, the hand of Incubus
Upon her throat, are gone like night! All things
Do well, and still his function is to each
Consummate welfare: as the unheeded garb
Upon the rising and the falling breast
Of beauty, that still moveth as she moves,
Breathes with her breath, and quivers with her sighs,
So Nature's varied robe lies light on her.
Morn hath no past.
Primeval, perfect, she, not born to toil,
Steppeth from under the great weight of life,
And stands as at the first.
As love, that hath his cell
In the deep secret heart, doth with his breath
Enrich the precincts of his sanctuary,
And glorify the brow, and tint the cheek;
As in a summer-garden, one beloved,
Whom roses hide, unseen fills all the place
With happy presence; as to the void soul,
Beggar'd with famine and with drought, lo, God!
And there is great abundance; so comes MORN,
Plenishes all things, and completes the world.

Listen to his description of England. It is elaborate, but the elaboration is successful:—

This dear English land!
This happy England, loud with brooks and birds.
Shining with harvests, cool with dewy trees,
And bloom'd from hill to dell; but whose best flowers
Are daughters, and Ophelia still more fair
Than any rose she weaves; whose noblest floods
The pulsing torrent of a nation's heart;
Whose forests stronger than her native oaks
Are living men; and whose unfathom'd lakes,
For ever calm, the unforgotten dead
In quiet grave-yards, willow'd seemly round,
O'er which To-day bends sad, and sees his face;
Whose rocks are rights, consolidate of old,
Through unremember'd years, around whose base
The ever-surging peoples roll and roar
Perpetual, as around her cliffs the seas,
That only wash them whiter; and whose mountains
Souls that from this mere footing of the earth
Lift their great virtues, through all clouds of Fate,
Up to the very heavens, and make them rise,
To keep the gods above us.

At the foot of the page we find something far better:—

Balder.—Is this blossom sweet?
Doctor.—Most fragrant.
Balder.—Yet I pluck'd it on a rock
Where common grass had died.
Learn this, my friend:

> The secret that doth make a flower a flower,
> So frames it, that to bloom is to be sweet,
> And to receive to give. The flower can die,
> But cannot change its nature, though the earth
> Starve it, and the reluctant air defraud;
> No soil so sterile, and no living lot
> So poor, but it hath somewhat still to spare
> In bounteous odours. Charitable they
> Who be their having more or less, *so* have
> That less is more than need, and more is less
> Than the great heart's good will.

We could select a hundred passages of equal merit; but, as faithful critics, are bound now to take notice, and that at some little length, of what we think the defects of this remarkable poem.

We think that the two main objections to *Balder* will be monotony and obscurity. We will not say of the hero, what an admirer of Yendys said of the monk in *The Roman*, that he is a great bore and humbug; but we will say that he talks too much, and does too little. The poem is little else than one long soliloquy—a piece of thinking aloud; and this kind of mental dissection, however masterly, begins, toward the end of 282 pages, to fatigue the reader. *Balder* is in *this* respect a poem of the Manfred and Cain school, but is far longer, and thus palls more on the attention than they. A more fatal objection is the great obscurity of much in this poem. The story does not pervade it, as a clear road passes through a noble landscape, or climbs a lofty hill, distinct even in its windings, and forming a line of light, connecting province with province: it is a foot-path piercing dark forests, and often muffled and lost amid their umbrage. The wailings of Balder toward the close become oppressive, inarticulate, and half-frenzied; and from the lack of interest connected with him as a person, seem unnatural, and produce pain rather than admiration. This obscurity of Yendys has been, as we hinted before, growing on him. We saw few traces of it in *The Roman*. It began first to appear in some smaller poems he contributed to the *Athenæum*, and has, we trust, reached its climax in the latter pages and scenes of *Balder*. It is produced partly by his love of personification and allegory—figures in which he often indeed greatly excels; partly by a diseased subtlety of introspective thought; partly by those fainting-fits to which his demon (like a very different being, Giant Despair in the *Pilgrim*) is subject at certain times, and partly by a pedantry of language, which is altogether unworthy of so masculine a genius.

Take two specimens of this last-mentioned fault:—

> Adjusting every witness of the soul,
> By such external warrants I do reach
> Herself; the centre and untaken core
> Of this enchanted castle, whose far lines
> And strong circumvallations, in and in
> Concentring, I have carried, but found not
> The foe that makes them deadly; and I stand
> Before these most fair walls; and know he lies
> Contain'd, and in the wont of savage war
> Prowl round my scathless enemy, and plot,
> Where, at what time, with what consummate blow,
> To storm his last retreat, and *sack the sense*
> *That dens her fierce decease.*

The second is worse, with the exception of the first four lines:—

> As one should trace
> An angel to the hill wherefrom he rose
> To heaven, and on whose top the vacant steps,
> In march progressive, with no backward print,
> A sudden cease. Sometimes, being swift, I meet
> His fallen mantle, torn off in the wind
> Of great ascent, whereof the *Attalic pomp*
> Between mine eyes and him perchance conceals
> The *bare celestial*. Whose still happier speed
> Shall look up to him, while the *blinding toy*,
> In far perspective, is but as a plume
> Dropp'd from the eagle? Whose *talarian feet*
> Shall stand unshod before him while he spreads
> His pinions?

His description of the heroine, with all its exquisite touches, is considerably spoiled by a similar unwise elaboration and intricacy of language:—

> But when the year was grown,
> And sweet by warmer sweet to nuptial June,
> The *flowery adolescence* slowly fill'd,
> Till, in a *passion of roses*, all the time
> Flush'd, and around the glowing heavens made suit,
> And onward through the *rank and buxom days*, etc.

There is a mixture of fine fancy with the quaintness and odd phraseology of what follows:—

> She came in September,
> And if she were o'erlaid with lily leaves,
> *And substantived by mere content of dews*,
> Or limb'd of flower-stalks and sweet pedicles,
> Or made of golden dust from thigh of bees,
> Or caught of morning mist, or the unseen
> Material of an odour, her *pure text*
> Could seem no more remote from the corrupt
> And seething compound of our common flesh!

A splendid passage near this is utterly spoiled by language

as apparently affected as anything in Hunt's *Foliage* or Keats' *Endymion*:—

> Nature thus—
> The poet Nature singing to herself—
> Did make her in sheer love, having delight
> Of all her work, and doing all for joy,
> And built her like a temple wherein cost
> Is absolute; dark beam and hidden raft
> Shittim; each secret work and covert use
> Fragrant and golden; all the virgin walls
> Pure, and within, without, *prive and apert.*
> From buried plinth to viewless pinnacle,
> Enrich'd to God.

In justice, we must add one of the better passages of this very elaborate, and in many points signally felicitous description:—

> Yet more I loved
> An art, which of all others seem'd the voice
> And argument, rare art, at better close
> A chosen day, worn like a jewel rare
> To beautify the beauteous, and make bright
> The twilight of some sacred festival
> Of love and peace. Her happy memory
> Was many poesies, and when serene
> Beneath the favouring shades, and the first star
> She audibly remember'd, they who heard
> Believed the Muse no fable. As that star
> Unsullied from the skies, out of the shrine
> Of her dear beauty beautifully came
> The beautiful, untinged by any taint
> Of mortal dwelling, neither flush'd nor pale,
> Pure in the naked loveliness of heaven,
> Such and so graced was she.

Smith and Yendys differ very materially in their conception of women. Smith's females are houris in a Mahometan heaven; those of Yendys are angels in the Paradise of our God. Smith's emblem of woman is a rich and luscious rose, bending to every breath of wind, and wooing every eye; that of Yendys is a star looking across gulfs of space and galaxies of splendour, to one chosen earthly lover, whose eyes alone respond to the mystic messages of the celestial bride. Smith's idea of love, though not impure, is passionate; that of Yendys is more Platonic than Plato's own. We think that the true, the human, the poetic, and the Christian idea of love, includes and compounds the sensuous and the spiritual elements into one—a *tertium quid*—diviner, shall we say? because more complete than either; and which Milton and Coleridge (in his "Love") have alone of our poets adequately represented. Shelley, like Yendys, is too spiritual; Keats, like Smith, is too sensuous. Shakspere, we think, makes woman too much the handmaid,

instead of the companion, of man: his yielding, bending shadow, not his sister and friend:—

Stronger Shakspere felt for *man* alone

Ere closing this critique, we have to mention one or two conclusions in reference to Yendys' genius, which this book has deeply impressed on our minds. First, his *forte* is not the drama or the lyrical poem. The lyrics in this poem are numerous, but none of them equal to Smith's "Garden and Child," or to his own "Winter Night," in *The Roman;* none of them entirely worthy of his genius. Nor is he strikingly dramatic in the management of his scenes and situations. He should give us next, either a great prose work, developing his peculiar theory of things, in the bold, rich, and eloquent style of those articles he contributed to *The Palladium, The Sun,* and *The Eclectic;* or he should bind himself up to the task he has already in his eye, that of constructing a great epic poem. We know no writer of the age who, if he will but clarify somewhat his style, and select some stern, high, continuous narrative for his theme, is so sure to succeed in this forsaken walk of the Titans. The poet who has coped with the Coliseum, the most magnificent production of man's art, and with Chamouni, the grandest of God's earthly works, need shrink from no topic, however lofty; nay, the loftier his theme the better.

NOTE

Reception of "Balder"

That has been a very peculiar one. We quote from a clever friend the following description of the various criticisms it has encountered. "One critic rent his garments, and cast dust into the air, and called upon the rocks and mountains to cover the blasphemies of *Balder*, apparently ignorant of the fact that his own exclamation was blasphemous in the extreme. Another, thanking God for the enjoyment of reason, found in the book so many evident marks of insanity, that he immediately concluded the author to be an inmate of Hanwell Asylum, who had murdered his beautiful young wife, when she visited him in his cell, simply for the purpose of enshrining her memory in song! A third, naturally of a timid disposition, was so dismayed by the description of war in the seventh scene, leaping the hills in the shape of a gigantic steed, whose levelled head equalled the clouds, whose eye was a hot and bloody star, and whose snort resembled the clang of ten thousand clarions, that he hastily closed the volume, and imbibed a glass or two of old Madeira to steady his heart. A fourth chuckled like a swallow over his own sagacity, and leaped from his tripod, as the old philosopher sprang from his tub, when he discovered the great secret, that the whole poem was a hoax, a travesty of modern poetry, and a fearful flagellation of the poets. A fifth regarded the author as an amiable and accomplished young man, possessing many fine qualities of head and heart, but who had certainly been misled by some

malicious persons, and tempted by them to clothe in poetry, principles which sapped the foundations of society. A sixth (and here our reference will readily be recognised) remembered that the author had formerly written a revolutionary poem called *The Roman*, and filled as he has long been with aristocratic contempt for the firm of Mazzini, Garibaldi, & Co., he could not resist the opportunity of ridiculing *Balder* to the best of his small ability. He might be able to appreciate the more apparent beauties of the poem, for he is proud to exclaim, 'I also am a poet;' but the *hidden manna* he made no effort to obtain, and he found it more easy and profitable to caricature and invent nicknames, than to attempt an elaborate criticism."

With this clever classification of *Balder's* critics we cordially concur, and think that the gross injustice it has met is very significant of our present lawless, careless, and dishonest state of criticism. Still, we are far from thinking that the critics were alone to blame. *Balder*, with all its power and brilliance, has certainly a degree of disease in it. It is a great organ cracked. Its selection of a subject was an error, and its treatment of it is disfigured with obscurities and affectations, which, but for its vast counterbalancing power, would have entirely sunk it. Anything less happy, and more hideous than those pictures of which "War" is a specimen, does not exist in the language of men. Its very finest passages are marred by diffusion and *diabetes verborum*. In this we speak the sentiments of the wisest and the ablest of Mr. Dobell's friends, who all look upon *Balder* as on the whole a magnificent mistake, and some of whom entertain the hope that Part First will be Part Last. Again we tell him to relinquish lyrics and the drama for ever, and to gird up his loins for some epical achievement.

Our paper was written immediately after reading the poem for the first time. Were we re-writing it now, our language would require considerable alteration, alike in reference to its merits, its faults, and its sum-total effect; our opinion of the author's powers, possibilities, and poetical prospects, remains, however, unchanged. It will be his own fault if he does not become the first of living poets.

ALEXANDER SMITH

THERE is something exceedingly sweet but solemn in the strain of thought suggested by the appearance of a new and true poet. Well is his uprise often compared to that of a new star arising in the midnight. What is he? Whence has he come? Whither is he going? And how long is he to continue to shine? Such are questions which are alike applicable to the planet and to the poet. A new poet, like a new planet, is another proof of the continued existence of the creative energy of the "Father of Spirits." He is a new messenger and mediator between the Infinite and the race of man. Whither rising or falling, retreating or culminating, in aphelion or in perihelion, he is continually an instructor to his kind. There is never a moment when he is not *seen* by some one, and when to be seen is, of course, to shine. And if his mission be thoroughly accomplished, the men of future ages are permitted either to share in the shadow of his

splendour, or to fill their empty urns with the relict radiance of his beams.

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever;

so a poet, a *king* of beauty, is for ever a joy or a terror; a gulf of glory opening above, or an abyss of torment and mystery gaping below.

'Tis verily a fearful gift that of poetic genius; and fearful, especially, through the immortality which waits upon all its genuine inspirations, whatever be their moral purpose and tendency. Thus, a Marlowe is as immortal as a Milton—a Congreve as a Goldsmith—a Byron or Burns as a Wordsworth or James Montgomery—an Edgar Poe as a Longfellow or a Lowell. Just look at the dreadful, the unquenchable, the infernal *life* of Poe's *Lyrics and Tales*. No one can read these without shuddering, without pity, and sorrow, and condemnation of the author, without a half-muttered murmur of inquiry at his Maker—"Why this awful anomaly in thy works?" And yet no one can avoid reading them, and reading them again, and hanging over their lurid and lightning-blasted pages, and thinking that this wondrous being wanted only two things to have made him the master of American minds—virtue and happiness. And there steals in another thought, which deepens the melancholy and eternises the interest—what would Poe *now* give to have lived another life than he did, and to have devoted his inestimable powers to other works than the convulsive preparation of such terrible trifles—such *nocturnæ nugæ*—as constitute his remains? And still more emphatically, what would Swift and Byron now exchange for the liberty of suppressing their fouler and more malignant works—works which, nevertheless, a world so long as it lies in wickedness shall never willingly let die?

Alas! it is *too late*; εἴργαστο, as the Greek play has it. The shaft of genius once ejaculated can be recalled no more, be it aimed at Satan or at God. And hence in our day the peculiar propriety, nay, necessity, of prefacing or winding up our praise of poetic power by such a stern caution to its possessor as this:—"Be thou sure that thy word, whether that of an angel or a fiend, whether openly or secretly blasphemous, whether loyal or rebellious to the existence of a God and of his great laws, whether in favour of the alternative Despair or the alternative Revelation, the only two possible, shall endure with the endurance of earth, and shall remain on thy head either a halo of horror or a crown of glory."

Claiming, as we do, something of a paternal interest in Alexander Smith, we propose, in the remainder of this paper, first characterising his peculiar powers, and, secondly, adding to this estimate our most sincere and friendly counsel as to their future exercise.

It is a labour of love; for ever since the straggling, scratching MS., along with its accompanying letter, reached our still study, we have loved the author of the "Life Drama;" and all the more since we met him in his quiet yet distinct, modest yet manly personality. And perhaps the opportunities of observation which have been thus afforded may qualify us for speaking with greater certainty and satisfaction, both to ourselves and others, than the majority of his critics, about the principal elements of his genius.

We may first, however, glance at some of the charges which even his friendly critics have brought against him. He has been accused of over-sensuousness. The true answer to this is to state his youth. He is only twenty-five years of age, and wrote all those parts of the poem to which objections have been made when he was two or three years younger. Every youth of genius *must* be sensuous; and if he write poetry, ought, in truth to his own nature, to express it there. Of course we distinguish between the sensuous and the sensual. Smith is never sensual; and his most glowing descriptions, no more than those in the "Song of Songs," tend to excite lascivious feelings. Female beauty is a natural object of admiration, and a young poet filled with this passionate feeling, were a mere hypocrite if he did not voice it forth in verse, and, both as an artist and as an honest man, will feel himself compelled to do so. Had Wordsworth himself written poetry at that period of his life to which he afterwards so beautifully refers in the lines—

> O happy time of youthful lovers,
> O balmy time, in which a love-knot on a lady's brow
> Seem'd fairer than the fairest star in heaven—

it had perhaps been scarcely less richly flesh-coloured than the "Life Drama." In general, however, the true poet, as he advances in his life and in his career, will become less and less sensuous in feeling and in song. Woman's form will retreat farther back in the sky of his fancy, and woman's ideal will come more prominently forward; she will "die in the flesh, to be raised in the spirit;" and this inevitable process, through which even Moore passed, and Keats was passing at his death, shall yet be realised in Alexander Smith, if he continue to live,

and his critics consent to wait. If our readers will compare Shelley's conception of woman, in his juvenile novels *Zastrozzi* and the *Rosicrucian*, with Beatrice Cenci, or the graceful imaginary female forms which play like creatures of the elements in the "Prometheus," he will find another striking instance of what we mean. In some cases, perhaps, the process may be reversed, and the young poet who began with the ideal may, in after life, descend to the real, and drown his early dream of spiritual love in sensuous admiration and desire. But these we think are rare, and are accounted for as much from physical as from mental causes.

Smith has been called an imitator, or even a plagiarist. We are not careful to answer in this matter, except by again referring to his age. All young poets are imitators. "Poetry," says Aristotle, "is imitation." It begins with imitation, and it continues in imitation, and with imitation it ends. The difference between the various stages only is, that in boyhood and early youth poets imitate other poets, and that in manhood they pass from the study of models which they may admire to error and extravagance, to that great original, which, without blame, excites an infinite and endless devotion. That Smith has read and admired, and learned of Keats, and Shelley, and Tennyson, and many others, is obvious; but it is obvious also that he has read his own heart still more closely, and has learned still more from the book of nature. Every page contains allusions to his favourite authors; but every page, too, contains evidences of a rich native vein. The man who preserves his idiosyncrasy amid much reading of the poets, is more to be praised than he who, in horror at plagiarism, draws a *cordon sanitaire* around himself, and refuses to cultivate acquaintance with the great classics of his age and country. A true original is often most so when he is imitating or even translating others. So Smith has marvellously improved some of the few figures he has borrowed. The objects shown are sometimes the same as in other authors, but he has cast on them the mellowing, softening, and spiritualising moonlight of his own genius.

A still more common objection is a certain monotony of figure which marks his poetry. He draws, it is said, all his imagery from the stars, the sea, the sun, and the moon. Now we think we can not only defend him in this, but deduce from it an argument in favour of the power and truth of his genius. What bad or mediocre poet could have meddled with these old objects without failure? Nothing in general is so vapid as odes

to the moon, or sonnets on the sea. But Smith has lifted up his daring rod to the heavens, and extracted new and rich imagination from their unfading fires. He has once more laid a poet's hand upon the ocean's mane, and the sea has known his rider, and shaken forth a stormy poetry to his touch. Besides, his circumstances have prevented him from coming in contact habitually with aught but nature's elementary forms, and he has sung only what was most familiar to his mind. What could he have told us about the

> Alps and Apennines,
> The Pyrenean and the river Po,

whose summer excursions never, till of late, extended farther than Inversnaid or Glencoe, and to whom

> The stars were nearer than the fields?

Nothing worth listening to; and therefore he watches the moon circling large and queenly over the smoky tiles of the Gallowgate; or he contemplates the round red sun, shining rayless through the Glasgow morning fogs; or he sees the head of the Great Bear or the foot of Orion glimmering on him at the corner of the streets; or, striking out from the city, he marks the

> Labouring fires come out against the dark,
> Where, with the night, the country seem'd on flame;
> Innumerable furnaces and pits,
> And gloomy holds, in which that bright slave, Fire,
> Doth pant and toil all day and night for man,
> Throw large and angry lustres on the sky,
> And shifting lights across the long black roads.

Or, in his rare holidays, he sails to Loch Lomond, or paces the banks of Loch Lubnaig, and fancies eclipse instead of sunshine bathing the crags of Benledi, and shadowing into terror and inky darkness the placid lake. Thus has he sought to realise and to utter the poetry which he has found around him, and, verily, great has been his reward. Few as are the objects he describes, what a depth of interest he attaches to them. With what lingering gusto does he describe them. In proportion to the smallness of their number, is the strength of his love, the felicity of his descriptions, and the energy and variety of the poetic use he makes of them. It is as if he were apprehensive of immediate blindness coming to hide them from his view, and were anxious previously to daguerreotype them for ever before the eye of his soul.

In this we are reminded of Ossian; and the defence put in

by Blair on behalf of the monotony of the objects of his poetry may be used with fully more force in reference to Smith. His figures, like Ossian's, are chiefly derived from the great primary forms of nature, but their application is still more various, and much less than the Highland bard does he repeat himself, not to speak of the far subtler and intenser spirit of imagination which pervades the later poet. For we fearlessly venture to assert, that no poet that ever lived has excelled Smith in the beauty and exquisite analogical perception displayed in his images from nature. We select a few on this principle, that we have not seen them quoted in any other of the reviews or notices:—

The anguish'd earth shines on the moon—a moon.

Now the fame that scorn'd him while he lived
Waits on him like a menial.

His part is worst that touches this base world;
Although the ocean's inmost heart be pure
Yet the salt fringe that daily licks the shore
Is gross with sand.

The vain young night
Trembles o'er her own beauty in the sea.

The soft star that in the azure east
Trembles in pity o'er bright bleeding day.

The hot Indies, on whose teeming plains
The seasons four, knit in one flowery band,
Are dancing ever.

Oh, could I lift my heart into her sight,
As an old mountain lifts its martyr's cairn
Into the pure sight of the holy heavens.

His cataract of golden curls.

The married colours in the bow of heaven.

The while the thoughts rose in her eyes, like stars
Rising and setting in the blue of night.

The earnest sea
. . . ne'er can shape unto the listening hills
The lore it gather'd in its awful age:
The crime for which 'tis lash'd by cruel winds
To shrieks, mad spoomings to the frighted hills.

A gallant, curl'd like Absalom,
Cheek'd like Apollo, with his luted voice.

'Tis four o'clock already. See, the moon
Has climb'd the blue steep of the eastern sky,
And sits and tarries for the coming night.
So let thy soul be up and ready arm'd,
In waiting till occasion comes like night.

The marigold was burning in the marsh,
Like a thing dipp'd in sunset.

By the way, not one critic, so far as we know, has noticed the exquisite poem from which this last line is quoted—a poem originally entitled "The Garden and the Child," and which alike we and the author consider the best strain in the whole "Life Drama." Our readers will find it on page 91. Its history is curious. Mr. Smith was trudging one day to his work along the Trongate, when he saw a child "beautiful as heaven." There was no more work for him that day. Her face haunted him; her future history rose before his fancy; and in the evening he wrote the poem (or rather it "came upon him") in the space of two hours. Certainly it reads like inspiration. It is one gush of tender or terrible beauty. The author now says of it (p. 101):—

> I almost smile
> At the strange fancies I have girt her with—
> The garden, peacock, and the black eclipse,
> The still grave-yard among the dreary hills,
> Grey mourners round it. I wonder if she's dead.
> She was too fair for earth.

The child is another little Eva. We must say that we love not only little children, but all who love them. Especially we sympathise with all those who have some one dead and sainted image of a child hanging up in the chamber of their heart, as Kate Wordsworth hangs in De Quincey's, as A. V. hangs in our own, and who daily and nightly pay their orisons to the Great God who dwelt in it for a season. We suspect that scarce one who has lived to middle age but can remember some such early sunbeam, which shone as only sunbeams in the morning can shine, and returned with its freshness and glory all untainted to the fountain whence it sprang, bearing with it in its return to heaven a whole, loving, yearning, broken, yet submissive heart. Perhaps, after all, this feeling may have prejudiced us in favour of the "Garden and the Child," but certainly it was the perusal of it which first increased to certainty our previous notion that Mr. Smith was one of our truest poets.

It convinced us, too, that he had a heart. This, we fear, has of late been a vital deficiency in many of our most celebrated bards. The odious examples of Goethe and Byron, the constant inculcation, by critics, of the necessity of reaching artistic merit at every expense and every hazard, and the solitary or divorced life of some of our literary men, not to speak of the withering effects of scepticism and of a modified licentiousness, have all tended to deaden or mislead, or to render morbid, the feelings of our men of genius. Neither Keats nor Moore, nor Tennyson

nor Rogers, nor Henry Taylor, have given, in their poetry, any decided evidence of that warm, impulsive, childlike glow, which all men agree in calling "heart." They have proved abundantly that they are artists, and even poets, but have failed to prove that they are men.

We rejoice, however, to recognise in our younger generation of poets—in Yendys and Smith, and Bigg and Bailey—symptoms that a better order of things is at hand, and that the principle, "the Greatest of these is Love," so long acknowledged in religion, shall by and by be felt to be the law of poetry—understanding, too, by love, not a mere *liking* to all things, not a mere indifferentism, *raised on its elbow* to contemplate objects, but a warm, strong, and enacted preference for all things that are "lovely and true, and of a good report."

The great distinction between the speaker and the singer in this age, as in past ages, is, perhaps, music. Many now, as ever, possessing all other parts of the poet—genius, originality, constructive power—are doomed (sad fate!) all their lives long to the level of prose by their deficiency in ear, their want of music. Apollo's soul may be in them, but Apollo's lute they can by no means tune. Look at Walter Savage Landor! No one can doubt that he is intensely and essentially a poet, and that his prose and verse contain little bursts of glorious poetic music. But they are brief; they are broken; they are not sustained; they are perpetually intermingled with harsh and harrow-like paragraphs, and both his prose and verse conjoin in proving that he never could have elaborated any long, linked, and continuous harmony. Feeling all this, we have watched with considerable interest and care Smith's versification, trying it, however, not by any artificial standard, but solely by the ear; and our decided opinion is, that he has been destined by nature to sing rather than to speak his fine thoughts to the world. His poetry abounds with every variety of natural music.

Take that of the ballad, in this specimen:—

In winter, when the dismal rain
  Comes down in slanting lines,
And Wind, that grand old harper, smote
  His thunder harp of pines.

. . . .

When violets came and woods were green,
  And larks did skyward dart,
A Love alit and white did sit
  Like an angel on his heart.

. . . .

The Lady Blanche was saintly fair,
Nor proud, but meek her look;
In her hazel eyes her thoughts lay clear
As pebbles in a brook.

. . . . .

The world is old, oh! very old;
The wild winds weep and rave:
The world is old, and grey, and cold,
Let it drop into its grave.

Or take a specimen of what we may call the Wordsworthian measure, culled from the "Garden and the Child":—

She sat on shaven plot of grass,
With earnest face, and weaving
Lilies white and freak'd pansies
Into quaint delicious fancies;
Then, on a sudden, leaving
Her floral wreath, she would upspring,
With silver shouts and ardent eyes,
To chase the yellow butterflies,
Making the garden ring;
Then gravely pace the scented walk,
Soothing her doll with childish talk.

. . . . .

That night the sky was heap'd with clouds;
Through one blue gulf profound,
Begirt with many a cloudy crag,
The moon came rushing like a stag,
And one star like a hound;
Wearily the chase I eyed,
Wearily I saw the Dawn's
Feet sheening o'er the dewy lawns.
Oh God! that I had died.
My heart's red tendrils all were torn,
And bleeding, on that summer morn.

Or take a specimen of rich voluptuous blank verse:—

I will be kind when next he brings me flowers
Pluck'd from the shining forehead of the morn,
Ere they have oped their rich cores to the bee;
His wild heart with a ringlet will I chain,
And o'er him I will lean me like a heaven,
And feed him with sweet looks and dew-soft words,
And beauty that might make a monarch pale,
And thrill him to the heart's core with a touch;
Smile him to Paradise at close of eve,
To hang upon my lips in silver dreams.

Or hear this sterner, loftier, more epical strain:—

A grim old king,
Whose blood leap'd madly when the trumpets bray'd,
To joyous battle 'mid a storm of steeds,
Won a rich kingdom on a battle-day;
But in the sunset he was ebbing fast,
Ring'd by his weeping lords. His left hand held
His white steed, to the belly plash'd with blood,
That seem'd to mourn him with its drooping head;

His right his broken brand; and in his ear
His old victorious banners flap the winds.
He call'd his faithful herald to his side—
"Go! tell the dead I come." With a proud smile,
The warrior with a stab let out his soul,
Which fled, and shriek'd through all the other world—
"Ye dead! my master comes!" And there was pause
Till the great shade should enter.

Does not this description remind you of Homer's style? How rugged yet powerful its melody! We could quote many other passages, all corroborating our statement that Smith is naturally a master of music, and needs only a careful culture to complete the mastery. Since the appearance of the "Life Drama," he published a little chant in a Glasgow newspaper, entitled "Barbara," the copy of which we have mislaid, else we would have quoted it as a final triumphant proof of his musical power, as well as of his lyrical genius. It is one of the most touching little laments in the language. But here a question of greater moment occurs—Has this young poet, in addition to his exquisite imagery, his heart, and his music, a true and deep vein of thought, and does that thought, as all deep veins of reflection should do, run into religion? What is his theory of things? Is he a Christian, or is he a mere philosophic speculator, or poetic visionary? Now here we think is the vital defect of the poem, the one thing which prevents us applying to it the epithet "great." Mr. Smith is, we believe, no infidel; and his poetry breathes, at times, an earnest spirit: but his views on such subjects are extremely vague and unformed. He does not seem sufficiently impressed with the conviction that no poem ever has deserved the name of "great" when not impregnated with religion, and when not rising into worship. His creed seems too much that of Keats—

Beauty is truth—truth beauty.

We repeat that he should look back to the past, and think what are the poems which have come down to us from it most deeply stamped with the approbation of mankind, and which appear most likely to see and glorify the ages of the future. Are they not those which have been penetrated and inspired by moral purpose, and warmed by religious feeling? We speak not of sectarian song, nor of the common generation of hymns and hymn writers, but we point to Dante's "Divina Comedia," to all Milton's Poems, to Spenser's "Faerie Queen," to Herbert's "Temple," to Young's "Night Thoughts," to Thomson's "Seasons," to some of the better strains of Pope and Johnson,

to Cowper, to Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge. These, and not Keats, or Shelley, or Tennyson, or Byron, are our real kings of melody; they are our great, clear, healthy standards of song; they are all alike free from morbid weakness, moral pollution, and doubtful speculation; and the poet who would not merely shine the meteor of a moment, the stare of fools, and the temporary pet of the public, but would aspire to send his name down, in thunder and in music, through the echoing aisles of the future, and become a benevolent and beloved potenate over distant ages, and millions yet unborn, must tread in their footsteps, and seek after the hallowed sources of their inspiration.

This leads us, in the last place, to give our young poet a few sincere and friendly counsels. When he appeared first, he was, we know, and complained that he was, "deluged with advice." That deluge has now subsided, and we would desire, in its subsidence, to try to collect the essence of the moral it has left, and to impress it on his serious attention.

We will not reiterate to him the commonplaces he must have heard, *ad nauseam*, about bearing his honours meekly, and not being dazzled and spoiled with success, etc. That success has, indeed, been unparalleled for at least thirty years. The last case at all in point was Pollok's "Course of Time," but this, if our readers will remember, did not become popular till after its author's premature death had surrounded, as it were, all its pages with a black border, and made it to be read as men read the record of the funeral of a king. But Smith "arose one morning and found himself famous." That this sudden glare of fame on a head so young, were it not as strong as it is young, might have produced injurious effects, was a matter of some probability. But that danger, we think, is now past, and there are other dangers more to be dreaded, which may be on their way.

Mr. Smith should neither, on the one hand, rest under his laurels, nor, on the other, be too eager to snatch at more. Let him deeply ponder on the subject of his second poem, and let him carefully elaborate its execution. Let him mercilessly shear away all those small mannerisms of style of which he has been accused. Let him burn his Tennyson and his Keats; he has read them now long enough, and further perusal were not profitable. He has lately had the opportunity of extending his sphere of survey; he has seen the finest scenery in Scotland and South Britain; he has mingled with much of its most

distinguished literary society, and is now the secretary to an illustrious university, and in the metropolis of his native land. Let him select a topic for his new poem which will permit him to avail himself of these new advantages, and let him pour into it every drop of the new blood and every ray of the new light he has recently acquired. We rejoice to learn that he is no *improvisatore* in composition; that he loves to write slowly; that he enjoys the labour of the file; that almost every line in his "Life Drama" was written several times—rejoice in this, because it assures us that his next work shall be no hasty effusion, hatched by the heat of success, but that it shall be a calm and determined trial of his general and artistic strength. His styles and manners are, as our extracts have proved, manifold, and he might attain mastery in all. But we would earnestly ask him to give us more of that stern Homeric grandeur we find in his picture, quoted above, of the dying king:—

That strain I heard was of a higher mood.

We close this "deluge of advice," if he will call it so, by other three distinct counsels:—First, let him advance to nobler models than those he seems hitherto, almost exclusively, to have studied. We have been told that he has commenced a careful reading of Goethe, which may be of considerable benefit to him in the art of expression, as Goethe's style is generally supposed to be nearly faultless. But let him not rest there, since there are far loftier and far safer ridges on the Parnassian hill. We name, as the models to which he ought to give his days and his nights, Homer, Dante, Milton, Shakspere's sterner tragedies, and, above all, the poetry of the Bible. That he has read all these, we doubt not. What we wish him to do, is to study them; to roll their raptures, and to catch their fire; to make them his song in the house of his pilgrimage; and at their reverend and time-honoured altars, not only to kindle the fire of his own genius, but to consume, as chaff, whatever puerilities may have hitherto contributed to lessen the brightness of the flame.

Secondly, he must become less sensuous. In other words, he must put off the youth, and put on the man. He must think and sing less about "ringlets," and "waists," and "passion-panting breasts," etc., etc. All such things we pardon in him now, but shall be less disposed to forgive after a few years have passed over his head. A boy Anacreon may be borne with, but a middle-aged or old Anacreon is a nuisance, especially when he might have been something far higher. For the sake

of poetry, let him proceed to veil the statue of the Venus, and to uncover those of the Apollo, the Mars, and the Jupiter.

Our last counsel is the most momentous. He has himself painted in glowing colours his ideal of the poet as one who shall "consecrate poetry to God, and to its own high uses." Let him proceed with stern and firm step to fill up his own ideal, and accomplish his own prophecy. Let him be the great sublime he draws. Of this he may be certain, that the poet of the coming time must be a believer in the future as well as a worshipper of the past. He may not be a sectarian, but he must be a Christian. We do not want him to write religious poetry in the style of Watts or Montgomery, or any one else; but we want him to devote his fine powers more than he has hitherto done to the promulgation of high spiritual truth; if not, we foresee that one or two of his competitors in the poetic race, whom he has meantime outstripped, may overtake him, and come into the goal amid a deeper gush of applause and of thankfulness, from that large class who now look upon poetry as a serious thing, and are disposed to consult it as a subordinate oracle of the Most High. But we will not anticipate, far less despair. The vaticination of our hearts tells us that, apart altogether from comparative awards and successes, there are noble fields before Alexander Smith, and that his own words shall not fail of fulfilment.

> I will go forth 'mong men, not mail'd in scorn,
> But in the armour of a pure intent;
> Great duties are before me, and great songs.
> And, whether crown'd or crownless, when I fall,
> It matters not, so as God's work is done.
> I've learn'd to prize the quiet light'ning deed,
> Not the applauding thunder at its heels,
> Which men call Fame.

J. STANYAN BIGG[1]

THERE are, every tyro in criticism knows, three great schools or varieties in poetry—the objective, the subjective, and the combination of the two. The best specimens of the first class are to be found in Homer's "Iliad" and "Odyssey," in Burns's poems, and in Scott's rhymed romances; of the second, in the poetry of Lucretius, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, and some of the Germans; and of the combination of the two,

[1] "Night and the Soul:" a Dramatic Poem.

in Shakspere, Milton, Schiller, and Byron. Of late, almost all our poets of much mark have betaken themselves to the subjective. We propose, ere coming to Mr. Bigg, first, inquiring into the causes of this; and, secondly, urging our young poets, by a few arguments, to intermix a larger amount of the objective with their poetry.

One cause of the propensity of our rising race of poets to the subjective, has undoubtedly been the force of example. The poets who are at present acting with most power on the young mind of the age, are intensely subjective, and some of them to the brink of morbidity. The influence wielded over the lovers of poetry by Homer, Scott, or Burns, is slender, compared to that which Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, and the rest of the bardic brotherhood — the sons of Mist by Thunder — are exerting. The writings of the former are devoured like new novels, and then thrown aside. The writings of the latter are tasted slowly, and in drops—are studied—are carried into solitude—are read by the sides of lonely rivers, or on silent mountain tops, and ultimately surround the young aspirants with an atmosphere which goes with them where they go, rests with them where they rest, and hovers over their pens when they write. To the charm of these poets, it adds mightily that they are said to be, and are, more or less heretodox in their creeds. This gives a peculiar gusto to their works, the reading of which becomes a sweet and secret sin, smacking of the taste of the "stolen waters" and the "pleasant bread." Thus are two luxuries—that of the indulgence of daring thought, and something resembling contraband desire—united in the perusal of our later subjective poets.

Secondly, we live in a period of deep thoughtfulness, and great intellectual doubt. Never were there so many thinking. Never was thought so much at sea. Never were there so many "searchings of heart." Our blessed Lord mentions, as one of the most striking signs of his second advent—"perplexity." "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with *perplexity* —the sea and the waves roaring!" This sign is around us, even at the doors. The political and the moral, the intellectual and the religious worlds, are all equally perplexed, and in darkness. It is a midnight, moaning, weltering ocean, on which we are all embarked, and the day-star has not yet risen. Our poetical spirits are sharing, to a very large extent, in this perplexity; and this has led to incessant introspective views

and pensive contemplations. After Byron, there rose a short-lived race of rhymesters, who pretended to scepticism and gloom, but whose real object was to produce a stimulating effect upon the minds of their readers; and who, like quack doctors, distributed drugs to others, of which they themselves never tasted a drop. It is very different now. A real yearning uncertainty and thirst after more light, are now heard crying, if not shrieking, in many of our poets. All recent poems of mark, such as the "Life Drama," "Balder," "Festus," and "Night and the Soul," are more or less filled with those thoughts which wander through eternity; those beatings of strong souls against the bars of their earthly prison-house; those profound questions uplifted to heaven—"Whence evil? What the nature of man, and what his future destiny? What, who, and where is God?" True poets must sympathise with the tendency of their times, and as that, at present, is transitional, uncertain, and uneasy, their poetry must partake, in some measure, of that uncertainty and that unrest.

In connection with this, is the prevalent study of the transcendental philosophy by our poets. It was long imagined that poetry and philosophy were incompatible—that no poet could be a philosopher, and that no philosopher could be a poet. What God had often joined, man put asunder. It has, however, been for some time surmised, that critics were in this wrong. The fact that Milton was thoroughly conversant with the philosophies of his day, and the example set by the German poets, and by the Lakers, who combined ardent poetic enthusiasm with diligent and deep study of metaphysics, have rectified opinion on this point, and sent our young poets to their Kants, their Fichtes, and their Hamiltons, as well as to their Shaksperes and their Goethes. From these and other causes, it has come about, that at an age when the gifted youth of the past were singing of their Helens or their Marys—apostrophising their spaniels and robin-redbreasts, or describing the outward forms of sky and earth around their native village, their successors in the present are singing of the mysterious relations of nature to the human soul; are galloping their Pegasus from galaxy to galaxy; and are now entering the heaven of heavens, and now listening to the sound of the surge of penal fire, breaking on the "murk and haggard rocks" of that "Other Place."

Now, we are far from seeking to deny that this is, *on the whole*, what it should be, as well as what, inevitably, it must have been. It were as vain altogether to condemn, as at all to try to resist,

the stream of an age-tendency. Nay, this state of things has some advantages, and teems with some promise. It proves that the minds of men are becoming more serious and thoughtful, when even our youths of genius are less poets than preachers. It shows that we are living in a more earnest period. It proves progress, since our very youth have passed points where the mature manhood of the past thought it prudent and necessary to halt. It suggests hope, that in a future age there may be still higher, quicker, and more certain and solid advancement. But, looking at the matter on the other side, the exclusively subjective cast of much of our best poetry has produced certain evils. In the first place, it has tended to overcast the renown of our great objective poets, particularly among the young. Homer, Scott, Campbell, and Burns, are still, indeed, popular, but not so much, we think, as they were, and are read rather for their mere interest, than for their artistic and poetic excellence. Relished by many they still are, as sweet morsels; but seldom, if at all, studied as *models*. Secondly, it, on the other hand, excludes our really good poets of the subjective school from many circles of readers, who, seeking for some objective interest in poems, and finding little or none, are tempted to close them in weariness, or fling them away in disgust. Thomson, Cowper, Byron, as well as Shakespere and Milton, addressed themselves to all classes of minds, except the very lowest, and succeeded in fascinating all. Browning, and many besides, speak only to the higher minds, and verily they have their reward; their works are pronounced unintelligible and uninteresting by the majority of readers, and while loudly praised, are little read. How different it had been, if these gifted men had wreathed their marvellous profusion of thought and imagery round some striking story, or made it subservient to some well-constructed plot! The *Paradise Lost* and the *Pilgrim's Progress* are devoured by millions for their fable, who are altogether incapable of understanding their interior meaning, or perceiving their more recondite beauties. "Prometheus Unbound," and "Paracelsus," are read with pleasure by the more enthusiastic, but are *caviare*, not only to the general reader, but to many thousands who love poetry with a passion. Tennyson, on the other hand, with all his subtlety and refinement, seldom forgets to throw in such touches of nature, and little fragments of narrative, as secure a kindly reception for his poems, at once with the severest of critics, and the least astute of schoolboys. Why should poets

be read only by poets, or by philosophical critics? We think that every good poem should be constructed on the same model with a good sermon, in which the preacher, if a sensible man, takes care that there shall be at once milk for babes, and strong meat for them that are of full age; or upon the model of that blessed book, the Bible, which contains often in the same chapter the grandest poetry and the simplest pathos; here, "words unutterable," which seem to have dropped from the very lips of the heavenly oracle, and there, little sentences, which appear made for the mouths of babes and sucklings; here, "deeps where an elephant may swim; and there, shallows where a lamb may wade!"

Thirdly, this systematic subjectivism is almost certain to produce systematic obscurity and methodical mysticism. If an original writer sit down to compose poetry, either without the thought of any audience, or with only that of a few superior minds in view, he almost inevitably falls into peculiarities of thought, and idiosyncrasies of language, which suit only an esoteric class of readers, and will often baffle even them. If a poet only seek to "move himself," leaving it, as beneath him, to the "orator" to "move others," the consequence will be fatal, not only to his popularity, but to his genuine power. He will move nobody but himself. Look again to Browning's poetry: a wonderful thing it is, in many points and parts; but, as a whole, it is a book of puzzles—a vast enigma—a tissue of hopeless obscurity in thought, and of perplexed, barbarous, affected jargon in language. The same is true with much of Emerson's volume of poems. It is easy for these authors to accuse the reader of being dull in comprehension. The reader thinks he has a greater right to retort the charge of dulness upon the author. Where fire is, it shines; where a star is, it beams: the differentia of light is to be seen. But the density of much of our modern poetry is "dark as was Chaos, ere the infant Sun was rolled together, or had tried his beams across the gulf profound." It is amusing to watch the foolish faces put on by the admirers of this kind of rhymed riddles or blank-verse conundrums, when even they are unable to make out the meaning of some portentous passage, through which not a ray of light has been permitted to shine, and from which grammar and sense have been alike divorced; and to hear their mumbled apologies to the effect, "Depend on it, there are sunbeams in this cucumber, provided we were able to extract them!"

Another evil is the increase of a false, pretentious, and pseudo-

philosophic style of criticism, which, by being constantly exercised upon mystic or super-subtle poetry, becomes altogether incapable of appreciating any other, and often finds subjective meanings, where the objective alone was intended by the poet. The great master of this art abroad is Ulrici, whose *Midsummer Night's Dream* of Shakspere passes with many for a piece of profound and unmatched analysis. Specimens of the class are rife at home, and we deplore the increase amongst us of a style of criticism, which seeks to illustrate the *ignotum* by the *ignotius*, as though midnight could add illumination to mist.

What, then, is it asked, do we propose that our poets should do? Should they, as Professor Blackie in his late Stirling speech seems to think, abandon subjective song altogether; and, burning their Wordsworth and Shelley, betake themselves to ballad-poetry, Homer, Scott, and Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome?* By no means. This is not a legitimate conclusion from what we have now said. There remains a more excellent way. The third and best style, combining the direct dealing, the definite plan, and the clear purpose, the interest and the simpler style of objective poetry, with the depth, the thoughtfulness, the catholicity, and the universal references of subjective, should be attempted by our rising bards. They need not be at a loss either for models or subjects. All Shakspere may become their exemplar. Let them look especially to his *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Lear*, and *Timon*, and notice how, in these masterpieces of his genius, he has united the subtlest reflection and loftiest imagination, to the liveliest interest and the warmest human feeling. How clear he is, too, amid all his depth; how direct amid all his passion; and how masculine amid all his subtlety, not to speak of the infinite variety produced by his interchange of the gay with the grave—of the comic with the tragic elements. Or let them study not Shelley's "Prometheus," but his "Cenci;" and take not the monstrosity of the story, but the manhood of the style, for their model. Or let them read "Wallenstein," and the other great dramas of Schiller. Or let them consult Byron himself, and see how, in "Manfred," in "Sardanapalus," and in "Cain," he has combined the deepest thought *he* was capable of, and admirable artistic management of style and character, with vividness of individual portraiture, and intensity of interest. As to subjects, they are inexhaustible, as long as there are so many passages and characters in history waiting for treatment; panting, shall we say, for that incarnation which genius only

can give. We point at present to one, a gigantic one—to Danton. Which of our young poets, our Smiths, Masseys, Biggs, and Yendyses, shall win a crown of immortal fame, by writing a rugged historical drama, after the old *Julius Cæsar* or *Richard the Third* fashion, developing the character and casting the proper glare of grandeur on the death of that wild wondrous Titan of the French Revolution? "Danton," said Scott, long ago, "is a subject fit for the treatment of Shakspere or Schiller."

After all the deductions and exceptions implied in the foregoing remarks, we cannot but express our delight at the fine flush of genuine poetry which the last few years have witnessed alike in England, Ireland, and Scotland. In a MS. volume, we find some sentences written by us in the year 1835, when we were newly of age, which we transcribe, because they express anticipations which have been of late signally fulfilled. "It is objected, 'People will not nowadays read poetry.' True; they will not read what is *called* poetry. They will not read tenth-rate imitations of Byron. They will not read nursery themes for which a schoolboy would be flogged. They will not read respectable commonplace. They will not read even the study-sweepings of reputed men, who imagine, in their complacency, that the universe is agape for the rinsings of their genius. But neither will people, if they can help it, eat raw turnips, or drink ditch water, nor have willingly done so, from the flood downwards, to our knowledge. But people would read real poetry, were it given them. Indeed, an outcry about the decline of poetry is sure, sooner or later, to provoke a reaction. It will, indeed, encourage an enterprising spirit. 'The field,' he will say, 'lies clear, or is peopled only by Lilliputians, supplicating to be spit upon rather than neglected. Why should not I enter on it?' The age is now awake. The slightest symptoms of original power are now recognised. And *we often figure to ourselves the rapture with which a great poet, writing in the spirit of his age, would now be welcomed by an age whose manuals are already Wordsworth and Goethe.*"

No mean place among our rising poets must be allowed to J. Stanyan Bigg, who has once more challenged interest for the lake country of Cumberland, on account of the poetic genius it still inspires and fosters. He was born, we believe, at least he now resides, in Ulverston. He has, we understand, published some time ago, a juvenile volume of poems, but this we have not seen. Part of his present work appeared, like Smith's,

Life Drama, piecemeal in the *Critic* — that admirable paper which is now, both in character and circulation, at the very top of the literary journals in the metropolis; and the Groombridges have now placed the whole before us, in the shape of this handsome, portable, and well-printed volume.

Mr. Bigg—although classable in strict logic and method with the school of Bailey, and although bearing certain marked resemblances to Alexander Smith—is yet distinctively original; being less mystical than Festus, less sensuous than Smith—more humane and more Christian, we think, than either. He shines not so much in outstanding passages of intense brilliance, or in single thoughts of great depth, as in a certain rich pervasive spirit of poetry, in which (to use the word applied to it by a generous rival-bard) all his verses are "soaked." His poetry has not yet gathered into firm sunlike shape, but rather resembles what Dr. Whewell in his *Plurality of Worlds* supposes many of the stars still to be—fiery matter unconsolidated, and having hitherto cast off no worlds. Yet the light and the fire are genuine, and may be expected, in due time, to bring forth results both useful and splendid. We seem to perceive the following peculiarities, besides, in Mr. Bigg's poetry:—His imagery is remarkable for its boldness and variety. He has exhibited an equal appreciation of the beautiful and the sublime. He has that noble rush of thought and language which is so characteristic of genuine inspiration. He has a keen perception of the analogies subsisting between nature and the mind of man. And his hope in the destiny of humanity is founded on Christian grounds. These are his main merits. We shall, ere we have done, notice what seem his defects.

First, Mr. Bigg's imagery is uncommonly varied and bold. None of his figures are so striking, or so highly wrought, as some in the *Life Drama*, but there is a greater abundance and variety of them. The nature of his theme ("Night") leads him to select many from the scenery of that season—its stars, its wailing winds, the many mysterious sights and sounds which haunt its solitudes. But, besides these, he gathers analogies from a thousand other regions, and skirts his Night with a bright border of Daylight imagery. Here, for instance, are some sweet and soothing figures:—

> Bless them, and bless the world. Oh may it rest
> In peace upon thy bosom, like a ship
> On the unrippled silver of the sea,
> Or like a green tree in the circling blue
> Of the bright joyousness of summer-morns.

Here, again, is a rich Arabian-Night kind of fancy:—

> Thou speakest in soul-pictures, yet I see
> Thy meaning rising through them, free and simple
> As a young princeling from the grand state-bed,
> Where his white limbs have been enswathed all night
> In gold and velvets.

As a proof of his variety, we give a passage containing, in the space of a few lines, three figures, all good, and all so diverse from each other:—

> Oh! 'twere as if a dank dishevell'd night
> Should rush up, madly haunted by the winds,
> All black as Erebus, upon the steps
> Of a great laughing oriental day.
> I should be wretched as a *cold lone house,*
> *Standing a mark upon a northern moor,*
> Eaves-deep in snow, surrounded by black pools,
> *Pelted by winter, ever anger-pale,*
> To lose you; having tasted of such bliss,
> Such sweet companionship, such holy joy,
> 'Twere as if earth should be flung back again,
> All singing as she is, and crown'd with flowers,
> Into the reeking cycles of her past:
> Instead of valleys, sedgy swamps, and fens,
> With grim, unwieldy reptiles trailing through,
> And in the place of singing, bellowings,
> And the wild roar of monsters on the hills.

That "cold lone house," what a picture! It is worthy of Crabbe; only Mr. Bigg gives it a personification more powerfl than was competent to that poet, and you feel for it as if it were a forlorn human being. How often we have regarded houses in the country with similar emotions. One seemed sheltering itself, and consciously cowering, amid the woods which screened it from the northern blast. Another seemed shivering on a bare and bald exposure. A third, of mean aspect, but set on a hill, seemed ashamed of its exalted beggary, and far-seen nakedness, and striving for ever in vain to be hid. A fourth stood up with the majesty of an Atlas, in castellated dignity between earth and heaven, meeting the scene and the sun like an equal. A fifth seemed melancholy amid its eternal moors. And a sixth, a ruin, glared through the dull eyes of its broken windows and dilapidated loopholes, in rage and defiance, to a landscape over which it had once looked abroad in pride, protection, and love.

Secondly, Mr. Biggs seems equally attracted by, although not equally successful in, the beautiful and the sublime. Specimens

of the sublime are found in his poetry; one of the finest, we think, is the following:—

> Were all nature void, one human thought,
> Self-utter'd and evolved in act, left like
> A white bone on the brink of the abyss,
> As the sole relic of what once had been:
> Thou, who perceivest at a glance the all
> In one, who scannest all relationships,
> In whom all issues meet concentrative—
> Couldst from this puny fragment of thy works
> Recall, and re-arrange, and re-construct
> The mighty mammoth-skeleton of things,
> And fold it once more in its spotted skin,
> And bid the Bright Beast live.

Another is this. Speaking of the pre-Adamite earth, he says—

> She lay desolate and dumb as they,
> Save when volcanoes lifted up their voice—
> Olden Isaiahs in the wilderness—
> And told unto the incredulous wastes wild tales
> Of the great after-time—the age of flowers,
> Of songs and blossoms, MAN, and grassy graves.

But it is in the region of the beautiful that our poet is most at home. He has watered his muse at Grasmere Springs, and at the placid Lake of Windermere, rather than at the turbid waves of "grey Loch Skene," the still, slumbering, inky depths of Loch Avon and Loch Lea, or the streams of the Cona, moaning and foaming amid the rocks and gloomy precipices of Glencoe. We give two specimens of the many beautiful and pathetic strains with which this volume abounds. The following occurs at page 33:—

> A fair young girl,
> To whom one keen woe, like the scythe of Death,
> Had sever'd at a stroke the ties of earth—
> The tender trammelage of love and hope—
> And not released the spirit from its clay,
> But left it bleeding out at every pore,
> Clinging with torn hands to its prison-bars,
> And gasping out towards the light, in vain.
> For she had loved and been deserted; and
> All her heart's wealth was now return'd to her
> Base metal, and not current coin. Her love,
> Which went forth from her bright and beautiful,
> Came back a ghastly corpse, to turn her heart
> Into a bier, and chill it with its weight
> Of passive wo for ever. But the shock
> Had turn'd the poles of being, and *henceforth,*
> *In circles ever narrowing, her soul*
> *Went wheeling like a stricken world round heaven.*

EDITH

Eyes she had, in whose dark lustre
Slumber'd wild and mystic beams;
And a brow of polish'd marble—
Pale abode of gorgeous dreams—
Dreams that caught the hues and splendours
Which the radiant future shows,
For the past was nought but anguish,
And a sepulchre of woes;
Therefore from its scenes and sorrows
All her heart and soul were riven,
And her thoughts kept ever wandering
With the angels up to heaven.

When they told her of the pleasures
Which the future had in store,
When her sorrows would have faded,
And her anguish would be o'er;
Told her of her wealth and beauty,
And the triumphs in her train;
Told her of the many others
Who would sigh for her again:
She but caught one-half their meaning,
While the rest afar was driven:
" Yes," she murmur'd, " they are happy—
They, I mean, who dwell in heaven! "

When they wish'd once more to see her
Mingling with the bright and fair;
When they told her of the splendour
And the rank that would be there;
Told her that amid the glitter
Of that brilliant living sea,
There were none so sought and sighed for,
None so beautiful as she;
Still she heeded not the flattery,
Heard but half the utterance given:
" Yes," she answer'd, " there *are* bright ones,
Many too, I know—in heaven! "

When they spoke of sunlit glories,
Summer days, and moonlit hours;
Told her of the spreading woodland,
With its treasury of flowers;
Clustering fruits, and vales, and mountains,
Flower-banks mirror'd in clear springs,
Winds whose music ever mingled
With the hum of glancing wings—
Scenes of earthly bliss and beauty
Far from all her thoughts were driven,
And she fancied that they told her
Of the happiness of heaven.

For one master-pang had broken
The sweet spell of her young life;
And henceforth its calm and sunshine
Were as tasteless as its strife;

Henceforth all its gloom and grandeur,
  All the music of its streams,
All its thousand pealing voices,
  Spoke the language of her dreams;
Dreams that wander'd on, like orphans
  From all earthly solace driven,
Searching for their great Protector,
  And the palace-gates of heaven.

Another (a poem on Childhood) we meet on page 171:—

Always lightest was her laughter,
  There was dream-land in its tone;
Though she mingled with the children,
  Yet she always seem'd alone.
And her prattle—'twas but child's talk—
  Yet it always sparkled o'er
With a strange and shadowy wisdom,
  With a bird-like fairy lore,
Which you could not help but fancy
  You had somewhere heard before,
In some old-world happy version
  By a bright Elysian shore.

All the little children loved her—
  None so joyous in their play;
And yet ever there was something
  Which seem'd—ah! so far away
From the joyance and the laughter,
  And the streamlet's crisping foam—
'Twas as if some little song-bird
  Had dropp'd down from yon blue dome,
Warbling still among the others,
  Wandering with them where they roam,
And yet hallowing remembrance
  With low gushes about home!

Oh, the glory of those child-eyes!
  Oh, the music of her feet!
Oh, those peals of spirit-laughter
  Coming up the village street!
Shall we never hear her knocking
  At the little ivied door?
Will she never run to kiss us,
  Bounding o'er the oaken floor?
Has that music gone for ever?
  Are those tender lispings o'er?
Oh, the terror! oh, the anguish,
  Of that one word—evermore!

Ever was she but a stranger
  Among the sublunary things:
All her life was but the folding
  Of her gorgeous spirit-wings—
Nothing more than a forgetting—
  Still she gave more than she took
From the sunlight or the starlight,
  From the meadow or the brook:—
There was music in her silence,

There was wisdom in her look;
There was raying out of beauty
As from some transcendent book;
She was wonderful as grottoes
With strange gods in every nook!

And at night, amid the silence,
With her little prayer-clasp'd hands,
She look'd holy as the Christ-church
Rising white in Pagan lands:—
Seem'd she but the faltering prelude
To a great tale of God's throne—
As a flower dropp'd out of heaven
Telling whither it has grown.
But she left us—she, our angel—
Without murmur, without moan;
And we woke and found it starlight—
Found that we were all alone,
And as desolate as birds' nests,
When the fledglings have all flown!

But our house has been made sacred—
Sacred every spot she trod;
For she came a starry preacher,
Dedicating all to God.
Render thanks unto the Giver,
Though his gift be out of sight,
For a jubilant to-morrow
Shall come after this to-night!
She hath left a spirit-glory
Blending with the grosser light,
Oh, the earth to us is holy!
Oh, the other world is bright!"

Thirdly, Mr. Bigg exhibits that noble rushing motion of thought and language which testifies so strongly to a genuine inspiration, in which words seem to pursue each other, like wheels in a series of chariots, with irresistible force and impetuous velocity. Nowhere out of "Festus" do we find passages which heave and hurry along with a more genuine afflatus, than in many of Mr. Bigg's pages. Take two long passages, both of which are "instinct with spirit." The first will be found at page 21:—

The night is lovely, and I love her with
A passionate devotion, for she stirs
Feelings too deep for utterance within me.
She thrills me with an influence and a power,
A sadden'd kind of joy I cannot name,
So that I meet her brightest smile with tears.
She seemeth like a prophetess, too wise,
Knowing, ah! all too much for happiness;
As though she had tried all things, and had found
All vain and wanting, and was thenceforth steep'd
Up to the very dark, tear-lidded eyes
In a mysterious gloom, a holy calm!
Doth she not look now just as if she knew

All that hath been, and all that is to come?
With one of her all-prescient glances turn'd
Towards those kindred depths which slept for aye—
The sable robe which God threw round himself,
And where, pavilion'd in glooms, he dwelt
In brooding night for ages, perfecting
The glorious dream of past eternities,
The fabric of creation, running adown
The long time-avenues, and gazing out
Into those blanks which slept before time was;
And with another searching glance, turn'd up
Towards unknown futurities—the book
Of unborn wonders—till she hath perused
The chapter of its doom; and with an eye
Made vague by the dim vastness of its vision,
Watching unmoved the fall of burning worlds,
Rolling along the steep sides of the Infinite,
All ripe, like apples dropping from their stems;
Till the wide fields of space, like orchards stripp'd,
Have yielded up their treasures to the garner,
And the last star hath fallen from the crown
Of the high heavens into utter night,
Like a bright moment swallow'd up and lost
In hours of after-anguish; and all things
Are as they were in the beginning, ere
The mighty pageant trail'd its golden skirts
Along the glittering pathway of its God,
Save that the spacious halls of heaven are fill'd
With countless multitudes of finite souls,
With germ-like infinite capacities,
As if to prove all had not been a dream.
'Tis this that Night seems always thinking of;
Linking the void past to the future void,
And typifying present times in stars,
To show that all is not quite issueless,
But that the blanks have yielded starlike ones
To cluster round the sapphire throne of God
In bliss for ever and for evermore!
O yes! I love the Night, who ever standeth
With her gemm'd finger on her rich ripe lip,
As if in attitude of deep attention,
Catching the mighty echoes of the words
Which God had utter'd ere the earth was form'd,
Or ere yon Infinite blush'd like a bride
With all her jewels; and I love the flowers,
And their soft slumber as they lie around
In the sweet starlight, bathed in love-like dew,
And looking like young sisters, orphans too,
Left to our watchful care and guardianship,
To keep them from the rough-voiced, burly winds,
And see that nought invades their soul-like sleep.
Thou canst not tell me what I do not love,
In all this dark-robed family of peace:
The temporary hush of the low winds,
And their uprising wail;—the shadows there
Cast from the long dark shrubberies, that move
And rest again on the greensward, and nod
Their hearselike plumage to the passing winds;—
The deep, unclouded light, half glow, half gloom,

Dark, and yet lustrous, gleaming with a fire
Whose sources seem unfathomable;—love
Even the very grass beneath our feet,
Whose graceful blades I almost fear to tread on,
Because, when I have pass'd, they raise themselves
Again, half in reproach, so quietly
Turning themselves once more unto the heaven
That cherishes and feeds them, I could weep
That I had crush'd them underneath my foot;—
Even yon tree, standing so lonely there,
As if it dream'd of all the music which
Its branches used to hold when in their prime,
Ere it became a dead and blasted thing
Upon the bosom of the living world,
Which she still weareth, as a maiden wears
The wither'd flowers of the sweet Long-Ago,
Ere love itself and lover both were dead!
And yet I love it too—grim ancient thing.
All, all, oh! yes, I dearly love them all!

The second, still finer, meets us at page 39:—

O thought! What art thou but a fluttering leaf
Shed from the garden of Eternity?
The robe in which the soul invests itself
To join the countless myriads of the skies—
The very air they breathe in heaven—the gleam
That lights it up, and makes it what it is—
The light that glitters on its pinnacles—
The luscious bloom that flushes o'er its fruits—
The odour of its flowers, and very soul
Of all the music of its million harps—
The dancing glory of its angels' eyes—
The brightness of its crowns, and starlike glow
Of its bright thrones—the centre of its bliss,
For ever radiating like a sun—
The spirit thrill that pulses through its halls,
Like sudden music vibrating through air—
The splendour playing on its downy wings—
The lustre of its sceptres, and the breeze
Which shakes its golden harvests into light—
The diamond apex of the Infinite—
A ray of the great halo round God's head—
The consummation and the source of all,
In which all cluster, and all constellate,
Grouping like glories round the purple west
When the great sun is low. For what are stars
But God's thoughts indurate—the burning words
That roll'd forth blazing from his mighty lips
When he spake to the breathless infinite,
And shook the wondrous sleeper from her dream?
Thus God's thoughts ever call unto man's soul
To rouse itself, and let *its* thoughts shake off
The torpor from their wings, and soar and sing
Up in the sunny azure of the heavens:
And when at length one rises from its rest,
Like the mail'd Barbarossa from his trance,
He smiles upon it, in whatever garb
It is array'd:—whether it stretches up
In grand cathedral spires, whose gilded vanes,

Like glorious earth-tongues, lap the light of heaven;
Or rounds itself into the perfect form
Of marble heroes, looking a reproof
On their creators for not gifting them
With one spark of that element divine
Whose words they are; or points itself like light
Upon the retina, in breathing hues
And groups of loveliness on speaking canvas;
Or wreaths itself in fourfold harmony,
Making the soul a sky of rainbows; or
Sweeping vast circuits, ever stretching out
Broad-arm'd, and all-embracing theories;
Or harvesting its brightness focal-wise,
All centring in the poet's gem-like words,
Fresh as the odours of young flowers, and bright
As new stars trembling in the hand of God.
In all its grand disguises he beholds
And blesses his fair child. For thought is one,
As souls are in their essence, and it works
By kindred laws and processes in all;—
Whether it flames within thy mind, oh God,
And publishes itself in spheres of light,
In worlds of spirits—effluences of thee,
And shows its mighty convoluted throes
In embryotic suns and nebulæ;
Or glimmers dimly in the humble mind
Of one of thy earth's children, whose grand wish
And festival ambition is to bow
To thee; and whose most lofty thought is but
As the upturning of an eye in prayer;
Still are they one in nature—the great thought
That ray'd out into constellated worlds,
And the weak thought that went up in a sigh—
The grand and lofty thought that, lover-like,
Hung a new star-string on the neck of heaven,
And the poor, lowly one that, bee-like, brought
The honey of a pious wish to thee;
And this is one drop in that luminous flood;
One note from a light string of the great harp;
One leaf in all the universal wreath;
One point of all the glory of thy throne;
One atom of the substance of all worlds;
One gem upon the costly floor of heaven;
One tiny firstling among all the wealth,
Which, going from thee glances, is return'd
As suns. And to thine eye one human thought
Interprets all the rest; the dynasties
Of mightiest intellect or martial power,
The Pharaohs and the Cæsars, and the times
Of Persian splendour, and of Grecian might—
One human thought, invested in an act,
Lays bare the heart of all humanity,
And holds up, globule-like, in miniature
All that the soul of man hath yet achieved,
Its Paradises Lost, its glorious Iliads,
Its Hamlets and Othellos, and its dreams
Rising in towering Pyramids and Fanes,
To show that earth hath raptures heavenward;
And like the touch'd lips of a hoary saint,

Utters dim prophesies of after-worlds,
Making sweet music to the ear of God,
Like Memnon's statue thrilling at the sun;
And as the New Year opening into life
Is all-related to the ages, so
Are man's works unto thine, Almighty God;
And as the ages to eternity,
So are *all* works to thee, Great Source of all!"

Fourthly, the author of *Night and the Soul* has a quick perception of those real, but mysterious analogies, which bind mind and nature together. The whole poem is indeed an attempt to show the thousand points in which Night, in its brightness and blackness, its terror and its joy, its clouds and its stars, its calm and its storm, comes in contact with human hopes, fears, aspirations, doubts, faults, and destinies. For example, he says—

The solemn Night comes hooded, like a nun
From her dark cell, while all the laughing stars
Mock the black weeds of the fair anchorite.
Sorrow is but the sham and slave of joy;
And this sweet sadness that thou wottest of
Is but the dusky dress in which our bliss,
Like a child sporting with the weeds of wo,
Chooses a moment to enrobe itself.

Two beautiful separate strains will show still better what we mean. One we find at page 113:—

Thou pleadest, love, and all things plead;
For what is life but endless needing?
All worlds have wants beyond themselves,
And live by ceaseless pleading.

The earth yearns towards the sun for light;
The stars all tremble towards each other;
And every moon that shines to-night
Hangs trembling on an elder brother.

Flowers plead for grace to live; and bees
Plead for the tinted domes of flowers;
Streams rush into the big-soul'd seas;
The seas yearn for the golden hours.

The moon pleads for her preacher, Night;
Old ocean pleadeth for the moon;
Noon flies into the shades for rest;
The shades seek out the noon.

Life is an everlasting seeking;
Souls seek, and pant, and plead for truth;
Youth hangeth on the skirts of age;
Age yearneth still towards youth.

And thus all cling unto each other;
For nought from all things else is riven.
Heaven bendeth o'er the prostrate earth;
Earth spreads her arms towards heaven.

So do thou bend above me, love,
And I will bless thee from afar;
Thou shalt be heaven, and I the sea
That bosometh the star.

The other occurs at page 117, and is a powerful collection of gloomy images:—

I stand beside thy lonely grave, my love.
The wet lands stretch below me like a bog;
Darkness comes showering down upon me fast;
The wind is whining like a houseless dog;—
The cold, cold wind is whining round thy grave,
It comes up wet and dripping from the fen;
The *tawny twilight creeps into the dark,*
Like a dun, angry lion to his den.

There is a forlorn moaning in the air—
A sobbing round the spot where thou art sleeping;
There is a dull glare in the wintry sky,
As though the eye of heaven were red with weeping.
Sharp gusts of tears come raining from the clouds,
The ancient church looks desolate and wild;
There is a deep, cold shiver in the earth,
As though the great world hunger'd for her child.

The very trees fling their gaunt arms on high,
Calling for Summer to come back again;
Earth cries that Heaven has quite deserted her;
Heaven answers but in showers of drizzling rain.
The rain comes plashing on my pallid face;
Night, like a witch, is squatting on the ground;
The storm is rising, and its howling wail
Goes baying round her, like a hungry hound.

The clouds, like grim, black faces, come and go.
One tall tree stretches up against the sky;
It lets the rain through, like a trembling hand
Pressing thin fingers on a watery eye.
The moon came, but shrank back, like a young girl
Who has burst in upon funereal sadness;
One star came—Cleopatra-like, the Night
Swallow'd this one pearl in a fit of madness.
And here I stand, the weltering heaven above,
Beside thy lonely grave, my lost, my buried love!

Fifthly, this poet deduces a grand Christian moral from his story and whole poem. Alexis, his hero, after outliving many difficulties, trials, and doubts, comes to a Christian conclusion, in which he expresses the following magnificent passage (page 155):—

The heart is a dumb angel to the soul,
Till Christ pass by, and touch its bud-like lips.
Not unto thee, bold spirit on the wing,
Does the bright form of Truth reveal itself;
Soar as thou wilt, the heavens are still above,
And to thy questionings no answer comes—
Only the mocking of the dumb, sad stars.
Awhile thy search may promise thee success,

And now and then wild lights may play above,
Which, with exultant joy, thou takest for
The gleaming portals of the home of Truth—
'Twas but a mirage where thou saw'st thyself,
And not the image of the passing God!

Oh, with what joy we all set out for truth—
Newer Crusaders for the Holy Land—
Till one by one our guides and comrades fall,
And then some starry night, some cold bleak night,
We find we are alone upon the sands,
Far from all human aids and sympathies,
While the black tide comes roaring up the waste.

The highest truths lie nearest to the heart;
No soarings of the soul can find out God.
I was a bee who woke one summer night,
And taking the white stars for flowers, went up
Buzzing and booming in the hungry blue;
And when its wings were weary with the flight,
And the cold airs of morn were coming up,
Lo! the white flowers were melting out of view,
And it came wheeling back—ah! heavily—
To the great laughing earth that gleam'd below!
God will not show himself to prying eyes:
Could Reason scale the battlements of heaven,
Religion were a vain and futile thing,
And Faith a toy for childhood or the mad;
The humble heart sees farther than the soul.
Love is the key to knowledge—to true power;
And he who loveth all things, knoweth all.
Religion is the true Philosophy!
Faith is the last great link 'twixt God and man.
There is more wisdom in a whisper'd prayer,
Than in the ancient lore of all the schools:
The soul upon its knees holds God by the hand.
Worship is wisdom as it is in heaven!
"I do believe! help Thou my unbelief!"
Is the last, greatest utterance of the soul.
God came to me as Truth—I saw Him not;
He came to me as Love—and my heart broke,
And from its inmost deeps there came a cry,
"My Father! oh! my Father, smile on me;"
And the Great Father smiled.
Ah! 'tis a blessed world—a theatre
Where mighty purposes play out their parts:
We see not half its beauty till we are
That which we see through love. The holy heart
Fulfils the dream of olden alchymists.
Turning all things it touches into gold.
The highest wisdom of the wisest seer
Is that which brings his childhood back to him.
Christ was the babe's Apostle; and his words
Breathe the pure air of childhood, and its faith:
Stoop, stoop, proud man! the gate of heaven is low,
And all who enter in thereat must bend!
Reason has fields to play in, wide as air;
But they have bounds; and if she soar beyond,
Lo! there are lightnings and the curse of God,
And the old thunder'd "Never!" from the jaws

Of the black darkness, and the mocking waste.
Come not to God with questions on thy lips;
He will have love—love and a holy trust,
And the self-abnegation of the child.
'Tis a far higher wisdom to believe,
Than to cry "Question," at the porch of truth.
Think not the Infinite will calmly brook
The plummet of the finite in its deeps.
The humble cottager I saw last night,
Sitting among the shadows at his door,
With his great Bible open on his knee—
His grandchild sporting near him on the grass,
When his day's work was done—and pointing still
With horny finger as he read the lines,
Had, in his child-like trust and confidence,
Far more of wisdom on his furrow'd brow,
Than Kant in proving that there is a God,
Or Plato buried in Atlantis dreams!
I was a pilgrim gone in search of Him;
Reason, my guide, went wheeling through the dark,
And still I follow'd with a faltering joy,
Until at last we reach'd the utmost verge,
Where "Hither and no Farther!" is inscribed,
And my guide vanish'd, leaving me alone—
Alone—and the bright shrine I sought far off!
Alone—and the great waste behind me there,
Shutting me out from love and sympathy;
And there before, a waste yet wider still.
Ah! then it was my sturdy heart was touch'd:
I first felt awe, then love, then confidence;
And when I came once more into the world
From this soul-pilgrimage, behold! it smiled:
And it was morn, and all the birds were up,
And the one heart of all things throbb'd with joy;
And the old hills lay sleeping, sleek in sunlight;
It was a jubilee in praise of God—
An Orphic song—a festal hymn of praise!
I saw all seeming eccentricities
Were but the playing of the wider laws,
While law itself was systematic LOVE.
The passing winds sang vesper hymns to me;
And the old woods seem'd whispering, "Let us pray!"

Still more directly is the moral of the poem stated in the following words, which leave Alexis a "little child":—

The last secret that we learn is this—
That being is a circle after all.
And the last line we draw in after life,
Rejoins the arc of childhood when complete:
That to be more than man is to be less.

We need not dwell on the identity of this statement with the words of Jesus—"Except a man become as a little child, he can in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven;" nor express our joy at finding these words—which are at present a stumbling-block to many, in this proud and sceptical age, when intellect is worshipped as a god, and humility is trampled on as a slave—

taken up, set in the splendid imagery, and sung in the lofty measures of one of our most gifted young poets.

We have not analysed the story, for this reason, that story, properly speaking, there is none. Two couples are the principal interlocutors—Ferdinand and Caroline—Alexis and Flora. The first are all bliss and blue sky together; they seem almost in heaven already. Alexis, again, is a kind of Manfred—without the melancholy end of that hero. Certain spirits form a conspiracy against him, and lead him through wild weltering abysses of struggle—very powerfully described—during which he forgets poor Flora, and a lady named Edith dies in love for him. When he returns to himself, and reaches the solid ground of hope, he returns to Flora too, and they are left in a very happy frame—she blessing the hour of his deliverance, and he resuming his old poetical aspirations. The poem closes with a song, in the "Locksley Hall" style, on the "Poet's Mission," which is not, we think, in the author's best manner; and will be thought, by many, not quite in keeping with the Christian moral of the poem before enunciated.

And now for fault-finding. First, we state the want of objective interest. *Night and the Soul* is just a heap of fine and beautiful things. The story has no hinge. The plot is nothing. You might almost begin to read the book at the end, and close it at the beginning. Secondly, there is no dramatic skill displayed in the management of the dialogue. All the characters talk equally well, and all talk too long. All are poets or poetesses, uttering splendid soliloquies. Hence inevitably arise considerable monotony and tedium. Thirdly, we demur to that Spirit-scene altogether. Either these beings should have been described as doing *more*, or doing *less*. As it is, their introduction is a mere excrescence, although it is redeemed by much striking poetry. Fourthly, there is a good deal of the *hideous* in the poem, imitated, apparently, from the worse passages of *Festus*. We give one specimen—the worst, however, in the volume (page 132):—

> Last night I dream'd the universe was mad,
> And that the sun its Cyclopean eye
> Roll'd glaring like a maniac's in the heavens;
> And moons and comets, link'd together, scream'd
> Like bands of witches at their carnivals,
> And stream'd like wandering hell along the sky;
> And that the awful stars, through the red light,
> Glinted at one another wickedly,
> Throbbing and chilling with intensest hate,
> While through the whole a nameless horror ran;

And worlds dropp'd from their place i' the shuddering,
Like leaves of Autumn, when a mighty wind
Makes the trees shiver through their thickest robes:
Great spheres crack'd in the midst, and belch'd out flame,
And sputtering fires went crackling over heaven;
And space yawn'd blazing stars; and Time shriek'd out,
That hungry fire was eating everything!
And scorch'd fiends, down in the nether hell,
Cried out, "The universe is mad—is mad!"
And the great thing in its convulsions flung
System on system, till the caldron boil'd
(Space was the caldron, and all hell the fire),
And every giant limb o' the universe
Dilated and collapsed, till it grew wan,
And I could see its naked ribs gleam out,
Beating like panting fire—and I awoke.
'Twas not all dream;—such is the world to me.

This will never do. Fifthly, Mr. Bigg appears to us to write too fast, and too diffusely. Many of his passages would be greatly improved by leaving out every third line.

This, however, is an ungracious task, and we must hurry it over. The author of *Night and the Soul* is a genuine poet. He has original genius—prolific fancy—the resources, too, of an ample scholarship—an unbounded command of poetic language—and, above all, a deeply-human, reverent, and pious spirit breathing in his soul. On the future career of such an one, there can rest no shadows of uncertainty. A little pruning, a little more pains in elaborating, and the selection of an interesting story for his future poems, are all he requires to rank him, by and by, with our foremost living poets.

GERALD MASSEY[1]

Gerald Massey has not the voluptuous tone, the felicitous and highly-wrought imagery, or the sustained music of Smith; nor the diffusive splendour and rich general spirit of poetry in which all Bigg's verses are steeped; nor the amazing subtlety, depth, and pervasive purpose of Yendys's song. His poetry is neither sustained as a whole, nor highly finished in almost any of its parts; its power lies in separate sparkles of intense brilliance, shining on what is generally a dark ground—like moonbeams gleaming on a midnight wave. Whether it be from the extreme brightness of those sparkles, or from the gloom which they relieve, certain we are that we have never

[1] *The Ballad of Babe Christabel, and other Lyrical Poems.* With additional Pieces, and a Preface. By Gerald Massey.

made so many *marks* in the same compass in any poem. Indeed, we have seldom followed any such practice; but in Massey's case we felt irresistibly compelled to it—his beauties had such a sudden and startling effect. They rose at our feet like fluttered birds of game; they stood up in our path like rose-bushes amid groves of pine. Before saying anything more of this poet's merits or faults, we shall transcribe some of these markings.

In lonely loveliness she grew
A shape all music, light and love,
With startling looks so eloquent of
The spirit burning into view.

Her brow—fit home for daintiest dreams—
With such a *dawn of light* was crown'd,
And *reeling ringlets rippled round*
Like sunny sheaves of golden beams.

The trees, like burden'd prophets yearn'd,
Rapt in a wind of prophecy.

Hear this exquisite picture of a lover's heart, in the dark, rising to the image of his mistress:—

Heart will plead, "Eyes cannot see her. They are blind with tears of pain,"
And it *climbeth up* and *straineth* for *dear life* to *look* and hark
While I call her once again; but there cometh no refrain,
And it *droppeth down* and *dieth* in the *dark*.

I heard faith's *low sweet singing in the night*,
And *groping through the darkness touch'd God's hand.*

Some bird in sudden sparkles of fine sound
Hurries its startled being into song.

No star goes down, but climbs in other skies.
The rose of sunset folds its glory up,
To burst again from out the heart of dawn;
And love is never lost, though hearts run waste,
And sorrow makes the chasten'd heart a seer;
The deepest dark reveals the starriest hope,
And Faith can trust her heaven behind the veil.

The *sweetest swallow-dip of a tender smile*
Ran round your mouth in thrillings.

A *spirit-feel* is in the solemn air.

Unto dying eyes
The dark of death doth blossom into stars.

Sweet eyes of starry tenderness, through which
The *soul of some immortal* sorrow looks!"

Sorrow hath reveal'd what we ne'er had known,
With *joy's wreath tumbled o'er our blinded eyes.*

Darks of diamonds, grand as nights of stars.

'Tis the old story! ever the blind world
Knows not its angels of deliverance,
Till they stand glorified 'twixt earth and heaven.

Ye sometimes lead my feet to walk the *angel side of life.*

Come, worship beauty in the forest temple, dim and hush,
Where stands magnificence dreaming! and God *burneth in the bush.*

The murkiest midnight that frowns from the skies
Is *at heart* a radiant morrow.

The kingliest kings are crown'd with thorn.

When will the world quicken for liberty's birth,
Which she waiteth, with *eager wings beating the dawn.*

Oh, but 'twill be a merry day, the world shall set apart,
When strife's last brand is broken in the last crown'd tyrant's heart!

The herald of our coming Christ leaps in the womb of time;
The poor's grand army treads the Age's march with step sublime.

Yet she weeteth not I love her;
Never dare I tell the sweet
Tale, but to the stars above her,
And the flowers that kiss her feet.

And the maiden-meek voice of the womanly wife
Still bringeth the heavens nigher,
For it rings like the voice of God o'er my life,
Aye bidding me climb up higher.

Merry as laughter 'mong the hills,
Spring dances at my heart!"

Where life hath climaxt like a wave
That breaks in perfect rest.

We might long persist at this pleasant task of plucking wild-flowers. But we hasten to speak of some of the more prominent merits and defects of this remarkable volume. One main merit of Massey is his intense earnestness, which reminds you almost of Ebenezer Elliott, with his redhot-poker pen. Like him, he has "put his heart"—his big, burning heart—into his poems. Mr. Lewes, of the *Leader*, opines that Massey wants the power of transmuting experience into poetic forms, and that nowhere does the real soul of the man utter itself: two most unfortunate assertions—for the evident effort, and often successful attainment, of this author, more than with most writers, are, to set his own life to music, and to express in verse all the poetry with which it has teemed. He has been a sore struggler—with poverty, with a narrow sphere, with doubts and darkness; and you have this struggle echoed in his rugged and fiery song. He has been a giant under Etna; and his voice is a *suspirium de profundis.* Although still a very young man, he has undergone ages of experience; and, although we had not known all this from his preface and notes, we might have confidently concluded it from his poetry.

In his earlier poems, we find his fire of earnestness burning in fierce, exaggerated, and volcanic forms. The poet appears

an incarnation of the Evil Genius of poverty, and reminds you of Robert Burns in his wilder mood. He sets Chartism to music. He sings, with strange variations, "A man's a man for a' that." But this springs from circumstances, not from the poet himself; and you are certain that progress and change of situation will elicit a finer and healthier frame of spirit—and so it has proved. Although his poems are not arranged in chronological order, internal evidence convinces us that those in which he is at once simplest and most subdued have been written last. A change of the most benignant kind has come o'er the spirit of his dream, and has been, we beg leave to think, greatly owing to female influence. He has found his better angel in that amiable wife, whose virtues he has so often celebrated in his song, and in whom he sees a tenth muse.

The homage done by him to the domestic affections, his ardent worship of his own hearth, is one of the most pleasing characteristics of Gerald Massey's poetry, and has been noticed by more than one of his critics. It comes out, not for the sake of ostentation, or artistic effect, but spontaneously and irresistibly in many parts of his poems. We have great pleasure in transcribing words addressed to him by an eminent writer of the day, in which we cordially concur: "One everlasting subject of people's poetry is love, and you are at the age at which a man is bound to sing it. The devil has had power over love-poems too long, because the tastes of the people were too gross to relish anything but indecency, because the married men left the love-singing to the unmarried ones. Now, love before marriage is the tragedy of *Hamlet* with the part of Hamlet left out! Therefore the bachelor love-poets, being forced to make their subject complete, to go beyond mere sentiment, were driven into illicit love. I say that is a shame. I say that the highest joys of love are married joys, and that the married man ought to be the true love-poet. Now God has given you, as I hear, in his great love and mercy, a charming wife and child. There is your school. There are your treasured ideas. Sing about them, and the people will hear you, because you will be loving, and real, and honest, and practical, speaking from your heart straight to theirs. But write simply what you do feel and see, not what you think you *ought* to feel and see. The very simplest love-poet goes deepest. Get to yourself, I beseech you, all that you can of English and Scotch ballads, and consider them as what they are—models. Read 'Auld Robin Gray' twenty times over. Study it word for word."

The poem entitled the "Bridal" is hardly so simple as this writer would wish; but, as a *rich marriage-dress*, it challenges all admiration.

We must quote some passages.

Alive with eyes, the village sees
The Bridal *dawning* from the trees,
And housewives swarm i' the sun like bees.

Silence sits i' the belfry-choir!
Up in the twinkling air the spire
Throbs, as it *flutter'd wings of fire.*

The winking windows, stained rare,
Blush with their gouts of glory, fair
As heaven's shower-arch had melted there.

But enter—lordlier splendours brim,
Such mists of gold and purple swim,
And the light falls so rich and dim.

. . . . . .

Even so doth love life's doors unbar,
Where all the hidden glories are,
That from the windows shone afar.

. . . . . .

Sumptuous as Iris, when she swims
With rainbow-robe on dainty limbs,
The bride's full beauty overbrims.

The gazers drink rare overflows,
Her cheek a lovelier damask glows,
And on his arm she leans more close.

A drunken joy reels in his blood,
His being doth so bud and bud,
He wanders an enchanted wood.

Last night with weddable white arms,
And thoughts that throng'd with quaint alarms,
She trembled o'er her mirror'd charms.

Like Eve first glassing her new life;
And the Maid startled at the Wife,
Heart-pained with a sweet warm strife.

The *unknown sea moans on her shore*
Of life; she hears the breakers roar,
But, trusting him, she'll fear no more.

. . . . . .

The blessing given, the ring is on;
And at God's *altar radiant run*
The currents of two lives in one.

Husht with happiness, every sense
Is crowned at the heart intense,
And silence hath such eloquence!

Down to his feet her meek eyes stoop
As *there* her love should pour its cup;
But like a king, he lifts them up.

. . . . . .

Alone they hold their marriage-feast—
Fresh from the chrism of the priest,
He would not have the happiest jest

To *storm her brows* with a crimson fine;
And, sooth, they need no wings of wine
To float them into love's divine.

So *Strength and Beauty, hand in hand,*
Go forth into the honey'd land
Lit by the love-moon, golden-grand,

Where God hath built their bridal bower,
And on the top of life they tower,
And taste the Eden's perfect hour.

No lewd eyes over my shoulder look!
They do but ope the blessed book
Of marriage in their hallow'd nook.

O, flowery be the paths they press;
And ruddiest human fruitage bless
Them with a lavish loveliness!

Melodious move their wedded life
Through shocks of time, and storms of strife,
Husband true, and perfect wife!"

How genius can glorify every object or incident! Had Mr. Massey been describing the marriage of two spirits who are to spend eternity together, or the nuptials of philosophy and faith, he could not have expended more wealth and splendour of imagery, than he does upon what is substantially the story of two children driven by a foe or storm into a nook, where they fondle each other, or weep in concert, till the inevitable enemy comes up and removes them both. What else is the happiest mortal marriage? Still, the spirit of the strain is beautiful, and reminds us forcibly of the one song of poor Lapraik to his wife, of which Burns thus writes:—

There was ae sang amang the rest,
Aboon them a' it pleased me best,
Which some kind husband had address'd
To some sweet wife.
It thirl'd the heart-strings through the breast,
A' to the life.

Massey has no elements of the epic or constructive poet about him. He is simply and solely a true lyrist, and as such is both strong and sweet; but with sweetness in general, although not always, rejoicing over strength—sweetness, we mean, of thought, rather than of language and versification. Both of these are often sufficiently rugged. His sentiment seldom halts, but his verse and language often do. Some of his poems remind us of the dishevelled morning head of a beautiful child. This, however, we greatly prefer to that affectation of style, that absurd elaborate jargon, which many true poets of the day are allowing to crust over their style. Even our gifted friend Yendys must beware of a tendency he has lately exhibited in

Balder to pedantry and far-fetched forms of speech. Strong simple English can express any thought, however subtle; any imagination, however lofty; any reflection, however profound; any emotion, however warm; and any shade of fancy, however delicate. Massey, in all his more earnest and loftier strains, shuns the faults of over-elaboration and daintiness, and throws out diamonds in the rough. We may refer, as one of the best specimens of his stern and stalwart battle-axe manner, to "New Year's Eve in Exile." Hear these lines, for instance:—

> Men who had broken battle's burning lines,
> Dealing life with their looks, death with their hands;
> And strode like Salamanders through war's flame;
> And in the last stern charge of desperate valour
> On death's scythe dash'd with force that turn'd its edge.
> . . . . . .
> *Earnest as fire* they sate, and reverent
> As *though a God were present in their midst;*
> Stern, but serene and hopeful, prayerful, brave
> As Cromwell's Ironsides on an eve of battle.
> Each individual life as clench'd and knit,
> As though beneath their robes their fingers clutch'd
> The weapon sworn to strike a tyrant down;
> Such proud belief lifted their kindling brows;
> Such glowing purpose *hunger'd* in their eyes.
> . . . . . .
> The new year flashes on us sadly grand,
> Leaps in our midst with ringing armour on,
> *Strikes a mail'd hand in ours*, and bids us arm
> Ere the first trumpet sound the hour of onset.
> Dense darkness lies on Europe's winter world;
> Stealthy and grim the Bear comes creeping on
> Out of the North, and all the peoples sleep
> By Freedom's smouldering watch-fire; there is none
> To *snatch the brand and dash it in his face.*

This is masculine writing; resembling thy first and best style, O dear author of *The Roman*—a style to which we trust to see thee returning in thy future works. The grandest poetry has ever been, and shall ever be, written on *rocks*—like the stony handwriting traced by the tribes in their march through that great and terrible wilderness; or like the fiery lines which God's hand cut upon the two tables of the law.

We notice in Massey, as in all young poets, occasional imitations of other writers; nay, one or two petty larcenies. For example, he says,

> She summers on heaven's hill of myrrh.

Aird had said, in his "Devil's Dream,"

> And thou shalt summer high in bliss upon the hills of God.

Again, Massey says,

> The flowers fold their cups like praying hands,
> And with droop'd heads await the blessing Night
> Gives with her silent magnanimity.

Aird in the same marvellous dream had used the words,

> The silent magnanimity of Nature and her God.

In the same page Massey says,

> How dear it is to mark th' immortal life
> Deepen and darken in her large round eyes.

In Aird's "Buy a Broom" we find the following lines, *quoted*, however, and from what author we forget:

> Like Pandora's eye,
> When first it *darken'd with immortal life.*

In page 51 the following lines occur:

> Wept glorious *tears* that *telescope* the soul,
> And bring heaven nearer to the eyes of Faith.

We ourselves had said, "the most powerful of all telescopes is a tear." These, however, are really all the distinct instances of plagiarism we have noticed; and, besides being probably quite unintentional, they bear no proportion whatever to the numerous and splendid originalities of the volume.

We have endeavoured to find out from Mr. Massey's volume what his religious sentiments are; and think that, on the whole, he seems to have got little further, as yet, than the worship of Nature. We can forewarn him that this will not long satisfy his heart. Nature, to say the least of it, is a crude, imperfect process, not a complete and rounded result, far less a living cause. No delusion is becoming more general, and none is more contemptibly false, than a certain Brahminical worship of this universe, as if it were anything more than a combination of brute matter, coloured by distance and fancy with poetic hues. Carlyle has greatly aided our young poets to the pitiful conclusion that Matter is God. He cries out, "The Earth is my mother, and divine." He says again, after sneering at the authority of the Bible, "There is one book, of the inspiration of which there cannot be any doubt," namely Nature; forgetting that all the difficulties, and *far more*, which beset the thought that God is the inspirer of the Bible, beset the notion that he is the Author of nature; and that, if earth be *as a whole* divine, then its evils, imperfections, and unutterable woes must be divine, and consequently eternal too. We must warn young

poets against that excessive idolatry of light, heat, law, life, and their multitudinous effects, which are leading them so terribly astray, and sowing their pages with gross materialism, disguised under a transparent veil of Pantheistic mysticism. They see Silenus through a dream, and think him Pan, and make this Pan their only God. Connected with this, is that worship which they say can be best performed without going to church, and the fittest altars of which are

> The mountains and the ocean,
> Earth, air, stars—all that springs from the Great Whole,
> Who hath produced, and will receive, the soul;

forgetting that this worship, being that of the imagination, not of the heart, must be vague and cold; that energy, zeal, and piety have never in former times been long sustained without the aid of public as well as of personal devotion; that the most of those who have thus "worshipped they knew not *what*," in a manner they could hardly tell *how*, have been unhappy and morbid beings; that Milton, whose example, they often quote, although he left his church, did not forsake his Bible; that Jesus Christ, whom they venerate, while he went up again and again to a mountain to pray, himself alone, far more frequently was found in the synagogues on the Sabbath-day; and that, even on merely artistic principles, no finer spectacle can be witnessed on earth than a man of genius not retiring into haughty isolation, and bowing the knee with greater pride than if he blasphemed, but mingling quietly with the common stream of the multitude which is pouring to the house of God, and uniting his voice with their psalmody, his heart with their thanksgiving, and his soul with their adoration.

Since commencing this paper, we have read a book—attributed to Dr. Whewell, and published by Parker—on *The Plurality of of Worlds*.[1] Years ago, we had reached all the leading conclusions in this remarkable volume. Its merit is, that it bases what have long been our intuitions upon a solid foundation of logic and facts, proving, almost to a demonstration, that earth is the only part of the creation—at all events, of the solar system—which is yet inhabited. Our object at present in mentioning it, is to proclaim its value as a deadly blow in the face of creation-worship and Pantheism. It demonstrates that the glory of

[1] See our thoughts at greater length on this subject in a recent article in the *Eclectic Review*, to which we are happy to say the author in his "Dialogue," a masterly reply to his opponents, newly published, refers with satisfaction.

the heavenly bodies is all illusion—that they are really in the crudest condition—that there is not the most distant probability that they shall ever be fit for the habitation of intelligent beings—that man is totally distinct from all other races of beings, and is absolutely, essentially, and for ever superior to, and distinct from, the lower animals—and that, besides, he shall, in all probability, be renewed and elevated by a supernatural intervention. It hints, too, at our favourite thought (stated in our paper on Chalmers, in this volume), that, at death, we leave this material creation for ever, and enter on a spiritual sphere, disconnected from this, and where sun, moon, and stars are the "things invisible;" that, to use the words of MacIntosh to Hall, "we shall awaken from this dream, and find ourselves in *other spheres* of existence." And all these, and many similar ideas are not thrown out as mere conjectures, nor even as bold gleams of insight, but are shown to be favoured by analogy—nay, some of them *founded on fact*. We never read a book with more thorough conviction that we were reading what was true. Had the author gone a step or two farther still, we could have followed him with confidence. Had he predicted the absolute annihilation of matter, we could have substantiated his statement by the words of Scripture: "They shall perish, but Thou remainest; yea, all of them shall be changed and folded up as a vesture; but Thou art the same, and Thy years fail not." Again, we say that we deeply value this admirable book as a tractate for the times. It should be peculiarly useful to those poets who, like Mr. Massey, are constantly raving about the beauty, the glory, the immensity, and the divinity of Matter, each and all being palpable delusions, since matter is neither beautiful, nor glorious, nor immense, nor divine. It will show him that the glory of the moon, the planets, and the stars may be compared to the effects of a morning or evening sunshine upon the towers of an infirmary, a prison, or some giant city of sin—lending a false lustre to objects which in themselves are horrible or foul.

We must now take our leave of Mr. Massey. And, notwithstanding these concluding hints, we do so with every feeling of respect, admiration, and kindly feeling. Probably since Burns, there has been no such instance of a strong untaught poet rising up from the ranks by a few strides, grasping eminence by the very mane, and vaulting into a seat so commanding with such ease and perfect mastery. He has much yet, however, to do—to learn—and, it may be, to endure. It is yet all morning with him. Life's enchanted cup is sparkling at the brim. From

early sufferings he has passed into comfort, domestic happiness, and general fame. Many veils are yet to drop from his eyes. He has yet to learn the worthlessness of human nature as a whole, the impotence of human effort, the littleness of human life, and the delusive nature of all joy which is not connected with our duty to God and man. His present sanguine hopes and notions of humanity will wither, just as the green earth and blue skies will by and by appear altogether insufficient to fill and satisfy his soul. This process we regard inevitable to all genuine thinkers and lofty poets; but the great question is, Does it result in *souring* or in *strengthening* the man? Carlyle and Foster both passed through this disenchanting process; but how different the results! The one has become savage in his despair as a flayed wild beast. The other became milder and calmer in proportion to the depth of his melancholy. And the reason of this difference is very simple. Carlyle believes in nothing but the universe. Foster believed in a Father, a Saviour, and a future world. If Mr. Massey comes (as we trust he shall) to a true belief, it will compensate him for every trial and every sad internal or external experience, and he will stand like an Atlas above the ruins of a world, calm, firm, pensive, but pressing forwards, and *looking on high*.[1]

[1] Since this paper was written, we have read some specimens of Massey's *prose*, in his preface to his third edition, and in his review of *Balder* in the *Eclectic*. It is most excellent, clear, massive, masterly English, very refreshing to this age of mystical fudge.

HAZLITT[1]

In speaking of Hazlitt, we have nothing to do with him as a man, a politician, or a historian, but simply as a critic.

William Hazlitt was brutally abused while alive, and has been but partially appreciated since his death. Indeed, in many quarters he seems entirely forgotten. Sacrificing, as he did, popular applause in search of posthumous fame, he seems to have lost both—like the dog in the fable, shadow and substance seem alike to have given him the slip. Our proud and prosy quarterlies, while showering praise on the misty nothings which often now abuse the name of scientific or philosophic criticism —those compounds of natural and acquired dulness which disguise themselves under German terminology, and are deemed profound—seldom name, or coldly underrate, the glowingly acute, gorgeously clear, and dazzingly deep criticisms of poor Hazlitt.

Harry Cockburn thinks him ineffably inferior to Lord Jeffrey. Macaulay first steals from Hazlitt, and then puffs Hallam. Bulwer and Talfourd have done him justice; but rather in a patronising way. Horne did his best to imitate him, and paid back the pilferings in praise. But De Quincey and one or two more seem alone aware of the fact that no thinker of such rich seminal mind — of such genuine originality, insight, and enthusiasm, has been ever so neglected or outraged as the author of *The Spirit of the Age*.

Hazlitt was, in many respects, the most *natural* of critics. He was *born* to criticise, not in a small and captious way, but as a just, generous, although stern and rigorous judge. Nature had denied him great constructive, or dramatic, or synthetic power—the power of the highest kind of poet or philosopher. But he possessed that mixture in proper proportions of the acute and the imaginative, the profound and the brilliant, the cool and the enthusiastic, which goes to constitute the true critic. Hence his criticism is a fine compound—pleasing, on the one hand, the lover of analysis, who feels that its power can go no farther; and, on the other, the young and ardent

[1] From *A Third Gallery of Literary Portraits*, 1854.

votary of literature, who feels that Hazlitt has expressed in language what *he* only could " with the faltering tongue and the glistening eye." When he has a favourite, and especially an old favourite author to discuss, it becomes as great a luxury to witness as to feel his rapture. Even elderly enthusiasts, whose ardour is somewhat *passée*, might contemplate him with emotions such as Scott has so exquisitely described in Louis XI., when looking at the hungry Quentin Durward devouring his late and well-won breakfast. Youth—hot, eager, joyous youth —sparkles in Hazlitt's best criticisms even to the last. And yet, beside all his bursts and bravuras, there is always looking on the stern, clear, piercing eye of Old Analysis. Why is it that Hazlitt, thus eminently fitted to attract all classes, has failed to be generally popular? Many answers might be given to this question. There was first the special victimisation he underwent during his lifetime from the reviews and magazines. Old Gifford was his bitterest, although by no means his ablest opponent. The power wielded thirty years ago by that little arid mass of commonplace and dried venom is, to us, absolutely marvellous. The manner in which he exercised the critical profession showed, indeed, that he was perfectly skilled in his former one, especially in the adroit use of the awl. He was admirable at boring small holes; but beyond this he was nothing. If Shakspere's works had appeared in his time, he would have treated them precisely as he treated Shelley's and Keats', unless, indeed, they had been submitted to his revision before, or dedicated to him at publication. Otherwise, how he would have ostracised *Othello ;* mauled *Macbeth ;* torn-up *The Tempest ;* mouthed, like a dog at the moon, against the *Midsummer Night's Dream ;* laughed at *Lear ;* raved at *Romeo and Juliet ;* and admitted merit only in *Timon*, because it suited his morbid temper, and in the *Comedy of Errors*, because it melted down his evil humours into grim laughter. It is lamentable to think of such a man being respected by Byron, and feared by Hunt and Lamb. It is more lamentable still, to remember that he and his coadjutors were able to half-madden Shelley, to kill Keats, and to add gall and wormwood to the native bitterness of Hazlitt's spirit.

But he had other opponents, who, if not animated by all Gifford's spirit, had ten times his talent. Wilson and Lockhart bent all their young power against a writer whom both in their hearts admired, and from whom both had learned much. The first twenty-five volumes of *Blackwood's Magazine* are disgraced

by incessant, furious, and scurrilous attacks upon the person, private character, motives, talents, and moral and religious principles of Hazlitt, which future ages shall regard with wonder, indignation, and disgust. "Ass," "blockhead," "fool," "idiot," "quack," "villain," "infidel," etc., are a specmen of the epithets applied to this master-spirit. *Old Maga* has greatly improved in this respect since; but there is at least one of its present contributors who would perpetrate, if he durst,[1] similar enormities of injustice, and whose maximum of will to injure and abuse all minds superior to his own, is only restrained by his minimum of power. Need we name the laureate of Clavers, and the libeller of the noble children of the Scottish Covenant?

We see nothing wrong in genius now and then turning round to rend and trample on its pertinacious foes. But Hazlitt was far too thin-skinned. He felt his wounds too keenly, he acknowledged them too openly, and gave thus a great advantage to his opponents. This was partly accounted for from his nervous temperament, and partly from his precarious circumstances. It was very easy for Lord Jeffrey, sitting in state in his palace in Moray Place, to curl his lip in cool contempt, or even to burst out into laughter, over attacks on himself in *Ebony;* or for Wordsworth, in his drawing-room on Rydal Mount, to grumble over the *Edinburgh*, ere dashing it to the other side of the room; it is very easy still, for those of us who are not dependent for subsistence on our writings, to treat insolent injustice with pity or scorn; but the tendency of such attacks upon Hazlitt was to snatch the bread from his mouth, to lower the opinion of his capacity with the booksellers, whose serf he was, and to drive him to mean subterfuges, which his soul abhorred, to prevent him literally from starving. He is said, a little before his death, to have met Horne, and said to him, "I have carried a volcano in my breast for the last three hours up and down Pall Mall; I have striven mortally to quench, to quell it, but it will not. *Can you lend me a shilling? I have not tasted food for two days.*"

Want of thorough early training, an unsettled and wandering life, want of time for systematic study, and want of self-control and of domestic happiness, combined to lessen the artistic merit, and have limited to some extent the permanent power, of Hazlitt's writings. Hence they are full of faults—the faults

[1] He has since dared! *Vide* that tissue of filthy nonsense, which none but an ape of the first magnitude could have vomited, yclept "Firmilian."

never, however, of weakness, but of haste, carelessness, and caprice. They swarm with gossiping anecdote, with flashy clap-trap, with egotism, with jets of bitterest venom, and with sounding paradoxes. They are cast chiefly, too, in the form of slipshod essays; nor has he ever completed any great, solid, separate work, for his *Life of Napoleon* is not worthy of his powers. His superficial readers—especially if their minds have been previously poisoned by reading the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood*—fasten on these faults, and never get farther. "An amusing, flimsy writer," is the highest compliment they find in their hearts to bestow on one of the finest and deepest thinkers of the day. Our misty Germanisers, again, find him too clear, too brilliant, not sufficiently conversant with Kant, Fichte, Schiller, and Goethe, and vote him obsolete. Carlyle classes him with Dermody in one paper, and in another talks of him in such terms as these: "How many a poor Hazlitt must wander over God's verdant earth, like the unblest over burning deserts—passionately dig wells, and draw up only the dry quicksand, and at last die and make no sign." Such injustice is too rank long to continue rampent. Hazlitt, as a man, had errors of no little magnitude; but he was as sincere and honest a being as ever breathed. If not practically a Christian, he respected Christianity; he saw, though he shrank from, its unique and glorious character; he owned its unparalleled power; he has praised its Bible with all the enthusiasm of his heart, and with all the riches of his genius; and he would have burned his pen and the hand that held it, sooner than have set himself deliberately to sap by written innuendo, or blow up by open outrage, the faith in which his good old parents died. His writings constitute one of those quarries of thought, such as are also Bacon's *Essays*, Butler's *Sermons*, Boswell's *Johnson*, and Coleridge's *Table Talk*. They abound in gems, as sparkling as they are precious, and ever and anon a "mountain of light" lifts up its shining head. Not only are they full of profound critical dicta, but of the sharpest observations upon life and manners, upon history, and the metaphysics of the human mind. Descriptions of nature, too, are there, cool, clear, and refreshing as summer leaves. And then how fine are his panegyrics on the old masters and the old poets! And ever and anon he floats away into long glorious passages, such as that on Wordsworth and that on Coleridge, in the *Spirit of the Age*—such as his description of the effects of the Reformation—such as his panegyric poetry—his character of Sir Thomas Browne—and his

picture of the Reign of Terror! Few things in the language are greater than these. They resemble

The long-resounding march and energy divine

of the ancient lords of English prose—the Drydens, the Brownes, the Jeremy Taylors, and the Miltons.

All so-called "beauties" of great authors we detest. They are as dull as almanacs or jest-books. They are but torn fallen feathers from the broad eagle-wing. Nor do we mean to suggest that Hazlitt's works should be subjected to such an equivocal process. But we should like to see his *Select Works*, including a selection from his essays, the whole of his *Characteristics*, and his *Characters of Shakspere's Plays*—all his lectures delivered at the Surrey Institution—a selection from his purely metaphysical works—certain passages from his *Life of Napoleon*—copious excerpts from his pictorial criticisms—and his *Spirit of the Age* entire. It is a disgrace to literature; and while there are cheap editions of Lamb and Hunt, and dear editions of Jeffrey, Smith, and Macaulay, there is no good edition we know of, whether cheap or dear, of the works of a far more original thinker, eloquent writer, and earnest man, than any of them all.

We will allude but to one other feature in Hazlitt's critical character—we mean his attachment to Shakspere and Coleridge. Others admire Shakspere—Hazlitt loves and adores him; and this soft key of love opens to him many an intricate lock, and this deep light of adoration leads him safe through many a dark and winding way. Many prefer Ulrici, although, in fact, his work is just a "Midsummer Night's *Dream*" of Shakspere. It is not Shakspere himself—the clear and manly Englishman, as well as the universal genius—it is Shakspere seen through the mists of the Brocken, casting an enormous shadow, which is mistaken for and criticised as the substance. Indeed, we can conceive no spectacle more ludicrous than that of Shakspere in the shades reading Ulrici, and marvelling to find that he understood him so much better than himself, and saw more in him than he ever intended—nay, often the reverse of what he did intend.

Hazlitt read Shakspere with far greater perspicacity; saw his faults, and liked him better for them; took him at his word, believed what he said, and did not go about stumbling and groping for recondite meanings and merits in its author. Shakspere has now a great gallery of critics:—Johnson, with his

sturdy generalities of encomium; Mrs. Montague, with her elegant and lady-like, if not very profound tribute; Joseph Warton's graceful papers in the *Adventurer*, as well as his brother's more elaborate testimony in his *History of English Poetry;* Goethe, in his fine remarks on *Hamlet* in *Wilhelm Meister;* George Moir, in his refined and thoughtful *Shakspere in Germany;* Mrs. Jameson; De Quincey; Carlyle's striking sketch; Coleridge's wondrous talk about him; Hartley Coleridge's *Shakspere a Tory and a Gentleman;* Professor Wilson's scattered splendours on the subject in the *Noctes*, etc. But love for the subject, profound and watchful study of it, the blended intellect and ardour of his nature, and the graces and powers of his style, render Hazlitt, in our judgment, the best limner of that standing wonder of the world; and to his warm and living portraits we most fondly and frequently recur.

Coleridge, too—a man resembling Shakspere in width and subtlety, although not in clearness and masculine strength and directness—was seen by Hazlitt as few else saw him, and shown by him more eloquently and enthusiastically than by any or all his other critics. He knew him in his youth. He met him first at Wem, in Shropshire, where his father was minister; and most beautifully has he described, in his *First Acquaintance with Poets*, his meeting with the "noticeable man with large grey eyes." 'Tis to us the most delightful of all Hazlitt's essays, striking as it does on some of our own early associations.

Like Hazlitt, the author of this sketch was the son of a dissenting (though not a unitarian) minister; like him, spent many a sad and solitary hour in the country, cheered, indeed, by books and by the loveliness and grandeur of nature; like him, had "shed tears over his unfinished manuscript," while in vain seeking adequately to transcribe his confused but burning impressions of nature and of literature; and, like him, has again and again been delighted and raised from the dust by the visits and sermons of gifted preachers, who came like sunbeams to the sequestered valley of his birth; and he can hardly, therefore, read *My First Acquaintance with Poets*, or several other of Hazlitt's autobiographical essays, without a swelling heart and streaming eyes, as he thinks of the days of his own boyhood.

No man has better described than Hazlitt Coleridge's after-career, which was that of a comet among comets, more eccentric than all its lawless kindred; now assuming the form of a thin

and gaseous vapour, and now becoming blood-red, solid-seeming, and

> Firing the length of Ophiuchus huge
> In the Arctic sky.

Let it ever be remembered that he fought the battle of Coleridge's fame, when he was under the cloud of public opinion, and of the opium curse; and that, although separated from him afterwards by political and other differences, he never ceased to be his ardent eulogist, as well as his honest adviser.

Peace to the memory of William Hazlitt! That pale, haggard face; those eager, restless eyes; those dark, grey locks; that brain, ever prolific of new thoughts; and that heart, ever palpitating with new, fierce, or rapturous passions—are now all still and quenched in the sepulchre. We dare rear no temple over his dust—nor is it worthy of a pyramid; but his works form, nevertheless, a noble monument—solid as marble, and clear and brilliant as flame—expressing at once the strength and the splendour of his unrivalled *critical* genius.

THOMAS MACAULAY[1]

ONE great distinction between the great and the half-great is, we think, this: the half-great man is in his own age fully commented on and thoroughly appreciated; his character is faithfully inscribed in a multitude of reviews; his career is reflected in a wall of mirrors, which image his every step, and "now in glimmer, and now in gloom," trace out his history ere he be dead, and leave very little for posterity to add or to take away. The great man, on the other hand, while seldom quite overlooked or ignored, is as seldom during his life-time fully recognised: a shade of doubts hang around his form, like mist around a half-seen Alp; his motions are all tracked, indeed, but tracked in terror and in suspicion; his character, when drawn, is drawn in *chiaro-scuro;* his faults are chronicled more fully than his virtues; the general sigh which arises at the tidings of his death is as much that of relief as of sorrow; and not till the dangerous and infinite seeming man has been committed safely to the grave, does the world awake to feel that it has hid one of its richest treasures in the field of death. Nor should we entirely for this blame the world. For too often we believe that high genius is a mystery, and a terror even to itself; that it communicates with the demoniac mines of sulphur, as well as with the divine sources; and that only God's grace can determine to which of these it is to be permanently connected; and that only the stern alembic of death can settle the question to which it has on the whole turned, whether it has really been the radiant angel, or the disguised fiend.

We might illustrate our first remark by a number of examples. But our recent readings supply us with one more than sufficiently appropriate to our purpose. We have risen from reading for the first time Prior's *Life of Burke,* and, for the tenth or twentieth time, Macaulay's *Essays,* collected from the *Edinburgh Review.* And as we rise we are forced to exclaim, "Behold a great man, fairly though faintly painted by another, and a half-great man, unintentionally but most faithfully and fully sketched by himself." Macaulay has eloquently panegyrised Burke, and accu-

[1] From *A Third Gallery of Literary Portraits,* 1854.

rately discriminated him from inferior contemporary minds. But he seems to have no idea of the great gulf fixed between Burke's nature and genius and *his own*. He always speaks as if he and the object of his panegyric were cognate and kindred minds. Nay, some of his indiscriminate admirers have gone the length of equalling or preferring him to the giant of the Anti-Gallican Crusade. Let us, for their sakes, as well as his, proceed to point out the essential differences between the two.

Burke, then, was a natural, Macaulay is an artificial, man. Burke was as original as one of the sources of the Nile; Macaulay is a tank or reservoir, brimful of waters which have come from other fountains. Burke's imagination was the strong wing of his strong intellect, and to think and to soar were in general with him the same; Macaulay's fancy is no more native to him than was the wing of the stripling cherub assumed by Satan, the hero of the *Paradise Lost*, although, like it, it is of many "a coloured plume sprinkled with gold."

Macaulay's intellect is clear, vigorous, and logical; but Burke's was inventive and synthetic. Burke seems always repressing his boundless knowledge; Macaulay is ostentatious in the display of his. Of Macaulay's train of thought you can always predict the end from the beginning; Burke's is unexpected and changeful. Macaulay's principal powers are two—enormous memory and pictorial power; Burke's are also two—subtle, grasping, interpenetrating intellect and imagination. Burke is the man of genius; Macaulay the elaborate artist. Burke is the creature of impulses and intuitions—impetuous, fervid, often imprudent, and violent; Macaulay never commits himself, even by a comma, and seems, if he has impulses, to have dipped them in snow, and, if he has intuitions, to have weighed them in scales before they are produced to his readers. Burke has turned away from philosophic speculation to practical matters—from choice, not necessity; Macaulay from necessity, not choice,—it is an element too rare for his wing. Burke, as he says of Reynolds, descends upon all subjects from above; Macaulay labours up to his loftier themes from below. Burke's digressions are those of uncontrollable power, wantoning in its strength; Macaulay's are those of deliberate purpose and elaborate effort, to relieve and make his byways increase the interest of his highways. Burke's most memorable things are strong simple sentences of wisdom or epithets, each carrying a question on its point, or burning coals from his flaming genius; Macaulay's are chiefly happy illustrations, or verbal antitheses,

or clever alliterations. Macaulay often seems, and we believe is, sincere, but he is never in earnest; Burke, on all higher questions, becomes a "burning one"—earnest to the brink of frenzy. Macaulay is a utilitarian of a rather low type; Burke is, at least, the bust of an idealist. We defy any one to tell whether Macaulay be a Christian or no; Burke's High Churchism is the lofty buskin in which his fancy loves to tread the neighbourhood of the altar, while before it his heart kneels in lowly reverence. Macaulay's writings often cloy the mind of his reader—you are full to repletion; from Burke's you rise unsatisfied, as from a crumb of ambrosia, or a sip of nectar. Macaulay's literary enthusiasm has now a far and formal air —it seems an old cloak of college days worn threadbare; Burke's has about it a fresh and glorious gloss—it is the ever-renewed *skin* of his spirit. Macaulay lies snugly and sweetly in the pinfold of a party; Burke is ever and anon bursting it to fragments. Macaulay's moral indignation is too laboured and antithetical to be very profound; Burke's makes *his* heart palpitate, his hand clench, and his face kindle like that of Moses as he came down the mount. Burke is the prophet; Macaulay the grown and well-furnished schoolboy. Burke, during his life-time, was traduced, misrepresented, or neglected, as no British man of his order ever was before or since; Macaulay has been the spoiled child of a too early and a too easy success. As they have reaped they have sown. Macaulay has written brilliant, popular, and useful works, possessing every quality *except* original genius, profound insight, or the highest species of historical truth; Burke, working in an unthankful parliamentary field, has yet dropped from his overflowing hand little living germs of political, moral, literary, pictorial, and philosophic wisdom, which are striking root downwards, and bearing fruit upwards throughout the civilised world. Macaulay's works hitherto consist of several octavo volumes; but *Liberated America, India set free from Tyrants*, and *Infidel France Repelled*, are the three atlas folios which we owe to the pen and the tongue of Edmund Burke.

We had other points of contrast, which we forbear to press. Indeed, we feel ashamed at continuing so long a contrast between two persons so unlike. But Macaulay's unwise friends have compelled us to renew the old, and apparently superfluous work, of showing the superiority of an original to an imitator—of a sublime genius, informed from on high, to a cultured and consummate artist, galvanised from below—of one wearing a mantle which seemed dropped from some fiery chariot of the past, to

one " of the earth, earthy "—of one whose flights of genius and wisdom might almost entitle him to the name of the second Plato, to one who would be proud, we suspect, to bear that of the second Bacon, even although the meanness were added to the majesty, and the immortal degradation to the everlasting praise of the ambiguous and all-overrated name of the Chancellor of England.

We propose now, first, briefly to characterise, and in a general way, some of Macaulay's essays; and, secondly, to bend special attention on the longest and most elaborate of them all, that on " Lord Bacon."

There are in every author's works what may be called *representative* parts or papers—papers or books which indicate the leading qualities in his mind, or the leading stages in his intellectual development. Thus, in the case before us, we have " Milton " representing Macaulay the young and ardent scholar, " Byron " and " Johnson " representing him as the full-grown *litterateur*, " Warren Hastings," and a host more, representing him as the budding historian, and " Lord Bacon " as the thinker.

We have, first, " Milton," still, in our judgment, the sincerest, if not the most faultless of his papers. It is the work of a premature and impassioned school-boy, with the glow of the first perusal of the *Paradise Lost* extant on his cheek, and with the boy's dream of liberty still beating in his heart. Mr. Macaulay says that the paper contains " scarcely a paragraph of which his mature judgment approves." We may add, that there are many paragraphs in it which he now neither could nor durst write. " Men," says James Hogg, in the *Noctes*, " often, as they get auld, fancy themsel's wiser, whereas, in fac', they are only stoopider." It is not every one who, like Robert Burns, with his early volume of poems, sees at a glance that the " first bairn o' his brain is also the best." Artistically, Macaulay's " Milton " is not his best; but it is the opening of his vein—he throws forth in it a mass of pure ore, which he has since chiefly been employed in beating thin, or mixing with baser metals. Thus we find him, in many of his subsequent papers, cutting and clipping at his splendid picture of the Puritans—a picture which we deem true to the life of these illustrious men, as well as to the first sincere and burning convictions of Macaulay's young soul. He was not, as Sir Daniel Sandford somewhere insinuates, " a dishonest panegyrist of the Puritans." Brought up in a religious atmosphere, its influence still floated around him, as he wrote of those who " looked down with contempt

on the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and on priests—for they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language—nobles by the right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand." But, since, the giddy effects of success and the chilling influences of the world have combined to damp and lower his lofty tone, and he seems more than once inclined to give up the Puritans as a ragged regiment, and to say, "I'll not march with them through Coventry—that's flat." The associate of Lord Palmerston could not latterly retain much sympathy for Harry Vane. The confrere of Whately could scarcely now be honest in praising John Brown. When he wrote "Milton," he was a worshipper dividing his adoration between three objects —Poetry, Liberty, and Protestantism—and all three seemed robed in virgin loveliness. All have undergone a disenchantment—Poetry no longer walks the clouds, but the earth; Liberty is no more the "mountain-nymph," but the highly accomplished daughter of a whig nobleman dwelling in Grosvenor Square; and Protestantism (see his review of "Ranke"), instead of being the true child of the primitive age, and the destined heir of the earth, is a candidate with nearly the same claims and the same chances of final success, as the "Woman sitting on the scarlet-coloured Beast, and with the names of Blasphemy written on her forehead."

Indeed, we advise any one who wishes to compute the extent and the rapidity of the cooling process which has passed over Macaulay's mind, to compare his papers on "Milton," and on "Ranke." In the one he speaks, with just indignation, of the vices of Popery, "complete subjection of reason to authority, a weak preference of form to substance, a childish passion for mummeries, an idolatrous veneration for the priestly character, and, above all, a merciless intolerance." In his review of Von Ranke, on the other hand, how tenderly does he treat the Jesuits, some of whom he classes beside the Reformers; how coolly he traces the progress of the Catholic re-actions; with what satisfaction almost he records that Protestantism has come to a stand-still, forgetting or ignoring the facts that, although as a proselytising power nearly stationary in Europe, it is advancing as a missionary power in every other part of the globe; that, as the principal element of *British* progress, its torch is leading the great march of general civilisation; that, in its rudest shape, as "Protestantism protesting against itself," it has of late begun to heave in revolution every country and throne on

the continent; and that even to hint a doubt as to the ultimate result of its struggle with Popery, is an act of treachery and cowardice, and betrays an ignorance of its true nature and pretensions. In all his later papers, Macaulay talks as if Popery and Protestantism were modifications of one system, instead of being opposed, as light is to darkness, inertia to progress, deceit to truth, God to the devil. And while considering the attempts of such men as Macaulay to fritter away to nothing the distinctions between God's creed and the devil's creed, we are tempted to use the language of the prophet, "Woe to them who put darkness for light and light for darkness, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, evil for good and good for evil." The contest between Popery and Protestantism is no scuffle in the dark between detachments of the same army; it is a deadly fight between deadly foes, carried on in one compartment of that field, the world, where the powers of light and darkness have been waging for ages their ever-deepening, ever-widening, but not for a moment dubious engagement.

Protestantism at a stand-still! Neither as a statement of the facts at the time the paper was written, nor as a prophecy of what has occurred since, is this assertion of any value. It is true that nations do not of late change their creeds as individuals their cloaks. Islands are not now converted, as of yore, by the "yellow stick" of a Protestant proprietor (see Dr. Johnson's *Tour to the Hebrides*). Protestantism has, like many a strong tide, been rolled back again and again in its progress. Catholicism, on the other hand, has had, and has at this hour, spasmodic revivals, sudden flushes, like the colours of the dying dolphin. She *is* dying hard. Nor can she fully expire till the brightness of Christ's coming surprise, and the "breath of his mouth" consume, her. But, apart from this, we think it difficult for a candid and true-telling observer to shut his eyes to the fact of a slow, steady, cumulative advance on the part of Protestantism—often repulsed, sometimes driven fiercely back, but always returning to the charge, and gaining sure and gradual ground with the wave of each successive generation. What, after all, has she lost? At her birth, she was hailed by literature and science: they—on the points, at least, in which she differs from Popery—are on her side still. Her infant arm lifted the printing press, the mariner's compass, and the telescope. She holds them now with a stronger grasp than ever. She rent then the shroud from the Bible, and she still defies the Catholic world to repair the rent. In Britain and the United

States, and the great rising colonies of the South, and in the stronger half of Germany, she possesses the real keys of the intellectual world—keys more powerful than those fabled ones which clank at the side of Peter. In our own country, she, not long ago, with almost a superfluous expenditure of power and wrath, repelled the insolence of Papal aggression. One thing only does she want to complete the strength and dignity of her attitude, that is, not to become more Popish, but to become more Protestant. Without sacrificing her Bible or the leading principles of her creeds, without yielding to the raving scepticisms of the day, she might and must accommodate her spirit and language to those of the age; she might in many points abridge and modify her articles of faith; she might and must get rid of the wretched incrustations of Paganism and Popery which are still around her—become, in short, that New Protestantism for which Milton's spirit long ago sighed, which alone can attract and detain before the Lord the young and the gifted of the age, and be thus prepared, as the "Bride, the Lamb's Wife," for welcoming her Husband, when he descends to the Universal Bridal. And then, like Milton's eagle, shall this young and puissant Protestantism rise above the fogs of scepticism, and the purple mists of Rome, and mate her stern and starry eye with the unearthly and far-streaming glory attending the steps of Him "who shall come, will come, and will not tarry."

In his papers on Byron and Johnson, we find his enthusiasm wondrously subdued and united to an artistic self-command, a self-consciousness, an elaborate wit, a bitter sarcasm, and a *tone of society*, not to be found in his first paper. With the exception of his papers on Madame D'Arblay and Addison, they are the last of his purely literary articles. Before he wrote them, he had entered parliament, and there is in both a great deal of the clever parliamentary reply. The elaborate carelessness of the papers on Byron is wonderful. Never was art more artificially concealed. Never did a deliberate and oil-smelling production seem so like an *impromptu*. Done in the sweat of his brow, it yet reads like a private letter. Its simplest-seeming sentences have probably cost him most trouble. Such are a "poor lord and a handsome cripple." "Lord Byron's system had two great commandments, to *hate your neighbour*, and *to love your neighbour's wife*." How cool such fledglings seem! and yet they were probably hatched with great care, and amid considerable heat. His character of Byron is a long

antithesis, and might, had it been done into rhyme, have figured well in Pope's *Moral Epistles*. Bits of blame and pats of praise are distributed with exemplary equality. But, to apply his own words, "it is not the business of the critic to exhibit characters in this sharp, antithetical way." It is his business rather to show us the true nature of the man at once, by a winged word or a simple sentence, or in a figure "piercing to the dividing asunder of his soul and spirit." Had he spoken of Byron's aimless earnestness, his unprincipled and ill-managed power, his union of generosity and selfishness, his strong religious tendencies, connected with an utter want of definite religious or even irreligious opinions, or hinted at the dark germ of derangement which was working all along in his bosom, he had, in a sentence, helped us to a distincter view of the poet's character, than by his whole seventeen pages of vague and unmingled brilliancy. As it is, he accounts for Byron's matchless misery from his bad education, the loss of his first love, the nervousness of dissipation; from every cause save the deepest of all—the want of habitual intercourse with the Father of Spirits. Byron was miserable, because he felt himself an orphan, a sunbeam cut off from his source, "without hope, and without God in the world." But how Puritanical would any statement like this have looked in the eyes of the Reform Club, or of the splendid circles of Holland House!

To Boswell and Johnson, he is, we think, unjust, in various measures. Boswell, in his relation to Johnson, was one of the most sincere and remarkable of men. Used like a spaniel by his idol; now caressed contemptuously, and now fiercely spurned; laughed at by his friends and by the world for his attachment to Johnson, he remained true to him to the last, and has suffered for it after as well as before death, and nowhere more severely than at Macaulay's hands. To worship was the master instinct of his being, and he could no more avoid following it, than can the moon escape the gravitation of the earth. His conduct was the finer, from the contrast it presented to the selfish and infidel habits of the eighteenth century. Boswell had a god—Johnson; but Voltaire and Hume had none, except themselves or their callous theories. Boswell, in short, seems to us the first crude curdling of the future Hero-worshipper, as the alchemist was the rude forerunner of the genuine chemist. Nor were his talents so contemptible as Macaulay alleges. He was undoubtedly a clever and cultivated man. And the power to which he principally pretended, that of appreciation, he

possessed in a very large degree. He *saw* Johnson as few even since have seen him; he gave him, during his life, an ante-past of the praise of future ages, and he added one important item to his claims for immortality. Boswell's *Life*, according to many, is Johnson's greatest work; according to all, it is *one* of his best. Nay, we cannot but fancy that Macaulay originally possessed a great deal of the better element of Boswell, as his *Milton* testifies, and that to clear himself of the suspicion of being a Boswell of a bigger size, he has shed the blood of his own spiritual father.

Scarcely less unjust is he to Johnson himself, who, had he been alive, would certainly have turned him on the spit of one of his rolling periods before the slow, grim blaze of his manly indignation. "What is your opinion, Dr. J., of Thomas Babington Macaulay?"—"Sir, the dog has some gifts and accomplishments, but he is a Whig, a vile Whig, a trimmer, sir, who would have acted as laureate to King George and the Pretender at the same time. Sir, he would have written a panegyric on the Pretender, on the steam of the sack which the king had just sent in at his door."—"Isn't he something like Burke, sir?"—"No, sir; Macaulay, sir, has not breath to blow the bellows to Burke's fire. As Goldy would say, he has Burke's 'tongue,' but without 'the garnish' of his 'brains.'"—"What think you of his style, sir?"—"It is mine, sir, docked, yet the dog turns round, and abuses the suit of clothes he has not only stolen, but *mangled down*, sir, to his own stature."—"Doesn't he know a great deal, sir?"—"Yes, sir, facts, not principles; he has millions of farthings, but few guineas, and no bank-bills; he is like a school-boy, who knows all the birds' nests in the parish, but can neither fly, nor lay an egg, sir, nor even incubate to life the deposits of others."—"What think you of his religious creed, sir?"—"Why, sir, it is that of one who prefers God to the devil, because he is in, and not because he ought to be in, and who is full of saving clauses lest the tables should one day be turned, and the New Premier prove somewhat absolute. He has no creed, sir, only a new credibility of God and the gospels, sir."—"Isn't he descended from your old friend, Miss Macaulay, sir?"—"Too-too-too, sir, not from *Miss* Macaulay, surely, sir. His grandfather was a minister in the Hebrides, and probably had the second sight, which he has not left to his descendant, any more than old Zachary left him his religion, sir."

Dr. Johnson's merit, according to Macaulay, has now

shrivelled up into his "careless table-talk." His writings have little merit. His criticisms on Shakspere and Milton are "wretched." He knew nothing of the "genus, man — only of the species, Londoner." His style is "systematically vicious." His mannerism is "sustained only with constant effort." His "big words are wasted on little things." His prejudices and intellectual faults, too, are magnified by being torn from their context, and set up in cluster upon one pillory. Thus complacently does he try to "write down" old Sam as an ass. The attempt is as insolent as we hope to show it to be vain. Now, first, his table-talk was not "careless." It was the very sweat of his mind. In all good society he "talked his best." Secondly, it has discovered no new powers in Johnson's mind, although it has revealed new weaknesses. It has *increased* our notion of his variety, shrewdness, and readiness of retort, but not of his power, eloquence, and deep-hearted sincerity of nature. Thirdly, with regard to the prejudices and failings of this mighty man of valour, we ought to remember his time, his training, the dark disease which, like the leprosy in an ancient house, sent a stream of misery and embryotic madness throughout all the porticoes of his splendour, and all the columns of his strength—polluted every door, and looked out at every window —to remember that, strong and rock-founded that house must have been, to contain unbroken such a fearful guest—and to remember, in fine, that he is a poor forester who judges of an oak by its gnarled knots—and a petty astronomer who weighs the spots against the body of the sun. Fourthly, that his criticisms on Shakspere and Milton do not bring out the minor beauties, the more delicate shades, the subtler meanings, of our two great national poets, is admitted. Johnson's mental, like his bodily, eye saw only tall cliffs, wide fields, bold mountains, broad outlines—it was not conversant with details or minute varieties. But who has spoken better of the more general and palpable qualities of Shakspere, or of *Paradise Lost*—the pyramid of Milton's handiwork? *It* he found to surpass even his own Brobdignagian stature, and looking up to it in reverence, he had little leisure to mark the subordinate buildings on which Milton had slowly piled up its proud pinnacle. He is accused of not praising "The Castle of Indolence" very warmly, but he gives its author, and his far better poem, "The Seasons," their full meed. He called "Gray a barren rascal, and Churchill a blockhead;" but, if Mr. Macaulay had, as at *other* times, chosen to translate these expressions out of *Johnsonese* into plain

English, they had just meant the truth—this, namely, that Gray's genius was not so prolific as his learning was extensive, and that Churchill was not so good as he was able, and not so able as many thought. He has, indeed, admitted many stupid fellows into his *Lives of the Poets;* but, as he said he would, he has, in *his own way,* "*told us* that they were blockheads." In fact, his real offence, as a critic, in the eyes of many, is what, with us, is a merit. Himself a sincerely honest and pious man, an intense hater of humbug, of deceit, of brazen-faced infidelity, of twaddling sentimentalism, of the cant of virtue, and of the cant of vice, he has unsparingly exposed such offences wherever he found them, and many who cry out about his critical, have, in fact, taken fright at his moral, severity. Fifthly, as to the faults and mannerism of his style, we are not "careful to answer in this matter," least of all, in reply to the leading mannerist of this century. Johnson's is the mannerism of a left-handed giant. He throws awkwardly, but he throws stones which Macaulay could not *lift.* To say that he "sustains his style by constant effort," is simply untrue. It is notorious that the most sounding papers in *The Rambler* were written at a sitting, and *currente calamo.* He had but to dip his pen in ink, and there flowed out a current of thought and language, wide and voluminous as the Ganges in flood. We own our wrath always kindles when we hear others besides Macaulay preferring Addison to Johnson. We are not blind, as our former paper testifies, to his timid beauties, his inimitable irony, slight and withering as the smile of a scornful angel, his languid graces, the elegant negligence of his costume, his sweet-blooded and subtle humour, or his graver powers of contemplation and pathos; but there is this important difference in Johnson's favour:—Addison is chiefly a mirror; Johnson is a native mind. Addison reflects back—man and nature; Johnson is a thinker, penetrating into both. Addison's discussions and philosophising, even when just, are feeble; Johnson's, even when erroneous, are always strong. Witness the papers on the *Paradise Lost* by the one, and the *Lives of the Poets* by the other—a work which, with all its faults, is the most masculine and massive body of criticism in the English tongue. Addison's may be called almost a female mind of exquisite calibre; Johnson was every inch a man, nay, a son of Anak, from the rough earth, but with a heart touched, and a brow radiant with the influence and light of heaven. We base, indeed, our deepest admiration of this great man on his moral and religious qualities.

We are never weary of thinking of his sterling honesty, his rugged integrity, his fearlessness of consequences, his untaught dignity, his generous sympathies for all real sorrows, his benevolence—bear-like in its external manifestations, lamb-like in its heart—the depth and profundity of his spiritual convictions, the tenderness of his conscience, the firmness with which he clung to Christianity, in a low and infidel age, "faithful found among the faithless," his habitual fear of God—yea, we are not soon weary of admiring the rim of righteous anger which surrounded him at times—the severity of his occasional judgments, the fury of his assaults upon impostors of all sorts; and we can even bear with his sturdy prejudices, the errors of his temperament, the hasty verdicts of his excited conversation, his political and religious bigotries, and the rough usage he often gave to his friends and worshippers. These, like the scare of scrofula upon his cheek, are not beautiful, but they are *his*, and if they injure the grace of his aspect, they neither take a cubit from his intellectual stature, nor damp the vehement, though irregular flame of benevolence, sincerity, manhood, and piety, which burned in his heart. Would to God that some similar giant were now to tower up suddenly above the crowd of our sciolists, sceptics, and small poets, and rebuke them into sense, modesty, and Christianity again! Johnson was too decidedly an honest, fearless, and brawny original for Macaulay's handling. He succeeds far better in depicting the splendid clap-trap of Chatham, the gimcrack ingenuity and polished malice of Horace Walpole, the manners-painting force of Madame D'Arblay, and the cultured common sense and elaborate eloquence of Sir James MacIntosh. He succeeds better still in crushing the wasp Croker, sting, wings, bag of venom, and all, by one nervous grasp of his strong, hot hand, or in clapping into air, amid mimic thunder, the empty paper-bags of some of our modern poets.

As Macaulay's series of papers went on, it became manifest that he was gradually diverging from the flowery fields of literature, and turning towards the more difficult and less frequented heights of history. His "Machiavelli," "Burleigh," "Chatham," "Temple," and "Lord Clive," were all, in reality, historical chapters—the antennæ of coming historical works. Of such, by far the ablest and most brilliant is the article on "Warren Hastings." Indeed, we find in it, as in a microcosm, all the qualities, positive and negative, since more largely displayed in his *History of England*. These are intimate acquaintance, not only with the leading events, but with the minutiæ,

the gossip, the family history, and the floating scandal of the period; intense sympathy with the *personnel* of his heroes—a partiality for certain characters amounting to favouritism—a hatred for others amounting to fury—immense power of painting traits in character, and scenes in historic life—an inferior gift of describing nature—frequent, cool, and refreshing literary allusions, blowing like breezes across the otherwise arid or blood-dried pages of his tale—Whig zeal and religious indifferentism, both indifferently concealed—an occasional negligence of style more highly finished in reality than the most swelling of his paragraphs—great and laboured passages, reminding you of historical paintings, and relieved by surrounding etchings of familiar life—a perpetual consciousness of himself, and of the artistic nature of his task, which seldom permits any spontaneous betrayal of emotion, and makes even his enthusiasm seem cold, as the hair of a sculptured Mœnad—something of the interest and simplicity of Hume, along with the richer tints of Robertson, and the gorgeous description of Gibbon—all the qualities of a good novel, added to some of those of an ideal history—these are the leading peculiarities alike of his historical papers, such as "Hastings," and of his *England*, and they constitute him a historian after this age's own heart.

Admitting right cordially the exceeding interest and graphic power of the paper on Hastings, there are one or two points on which we must differ. We find in it evidences of that infirmity of trimming and balancing which so easily besets our author. We certainly do not think that Warren Hastings was a monster. Monsters in the moral world are still rarer than monsters in the natural; but, if the half of what Burke said, and the whole of what even Macaulay says against him be true, he must have been one of the worst characters in history. If seduction, perfidy, cruelty, greed, murder, both retail and wholesale, implacable revenge, and insatiable ambition, with a hundred smaller items of falsehood and corruption, are to be screened by success, it is time that the Ten Commandments were burned, the Sermon on the Mount buried, and the laws of nations and of nature repealed. Either he was one of the worst or one of the most maligned of men. Macaulay takes neither view; but between admiration of Hastings' abilities, and anger at some of his actions—reverence for Burke, and pity for the accused—sympathy with the oppressed people of India, and wonder at the splendid edifice of empire which was based on their blood—he himself hangs, and he suspends his readers in a state of

equilibrium which becomes half-painful and half-ludicrous, and tempts you at last to exclaim, "What would you have us to think of this man, after all? Was he a wise governor, or a cruel and unmanly oppressor? Shall we bless, or shall we ban him? Shall he sit in the synod of the gods, or, where Burke would have placed him, in that part of the Indian Pantheon where dwell the horrid deities who preside over small-pox and murder, and who, like the tremendous Three in the *Curse of Kehama*, expecting the coming of the 'Man Almighty,' might be conceived to wait impatiently for his advent, 'having been found worthy' to sit beside them on a burning throne?"

There is another point on which we crave a word: it is on the authorship of the *Letters of Junius*. This Macaulay, somewhat dogmatically, attributes *entirely* to Sir Philip Francis, although there is much internal evidence to prove him incapable of their better portions. The mere mechanism of their composition, the curt style, the fierceness and occasional malignity of their spirit, he could have supplied, but the profounder touches of satire, the strong clearness of diction, the high, almost superhuman scorn which so often inspirits them, the frequent gleams of deep political sagacity, and the figures, sparing in number, but breathing an intense poetical spirit—all point to the darker moods and the fretted and gall-dipped pen of Edmund Burke. We do not mean that he was their sole or chief author, but that his subtle genius had its share in their conception, even as it had in some of Barry's pictures and Reynolds's discourses; and that he drew many of their sharpest and finest strokes, seems to us certain, and to some others, too, who can recognise that "Roman hand," and who know that its versatility was equal to its power. Burke notoriously was in the secret[1] of their authorship. He was, according to Johnson, the only man living equal to their composition. And as to style neither he nor Junius were consistent in it. Junius had three different styles—that of his private notes to Woodfall—that of his hasty letters, such as his first to Horne Tooke—and that of his more elaborate epistles. Burke, too, strange to say, had three styles—his plain style, as of his charges against Hastings—his middle style, as of his *Sublime and Beautiful*, and *Thoughts on the Present Discontents*—and his ornate and poetical style, as in his *French Revolution*, and his *Regicide Peace*. There are, besides, passages and clauses in Junius which we are as sure were Burke's, as if we had seen him write, or dictate, or inter-

[1] See Prior's *Burke*, Vol. i.

line them. Take one, "the melancholy madness of genius without the inspiration." Burke once said to Boswell, about Herbert Croft, "He has the contortions of the sibyl *without the inspiration*." Of another we may say (accommodating Macaulay's language on another occasion), "Aut Burke aut Diabolus." It is in reference to Wilkes: "The gentle breath of peace will leave him on the surface, unruffled and unremoved. It is only the tempest that lifts him from his place." We could add a hundred more. On the whole, were we on a jury to try the question as to the authorship of *Junius*, we should be compelled, between the conflicting forces of the external and the internal evidences, to return a verdict against "Edmund Burke, Philip Francis, and other person or persons *unknown*."

Ne sutor ultra crepidam, is a proverb so commonplace, as to require an apology for its repetition. And yet we cannot remember anything more appropriate to the light in which we are now to regard the subject of this sketch, in connection with his paper on Lord Bacon—which is, Macaulay the Thinker. To use his own illustration, "Hannibal at Waterloo, or Wellington at Platæa," were not more thoroughly out of place than Macaulay "found" in the difficult region of intellectual thought—a region which he knows not fully, has seldom visited, has visited not in the choicest society, and where he has never yet, we suspect, *spent a night*, the glooms and the grandeurs of which are alike unappreciated by his strong but unimaginative and uninstinctive spirit.

Had we foreseen that Macaulay meant so far to compromise his reputation as to write a paper on a purely philosophical subject, we should have put in a previous protest, based on the following grounds:—First, in all his other writings he gives no evidence of possessing the elements of a genuine thinker. He thinks in facts, not in figures or symbols. He estimates all things by their sharp edges, not by their solid bulks or their ideal shadows. He looks at them not as they are, but as they seem to him, or to the mirror from which he has caught their shape. The term absolute (except in its political sense, as connected with "absolute power!") has to him little or no meaning. He has an outer eye of much scope and clearness, but his inner eye is midnight. We dare any of his admirers to quote a sentence of his writings containing in it a new truth, chased in a new image—"an apple of gold in a picture of silver." Of poetic physics, he has some distinct idea—of poetic metaphysics, none whatever. Nor has he given himself that philo-

sophic culture and training which would qualify him for sounding metaphysical depths. With all his vast knowledge, it is clear to us that he has only run across the surface of philosophy, and studied it rather as a historian, than as a profound critic of its various systems and schools. Nor has his temperament or his heart ever urged him on to very earnest personal inquiry into the grounds of belief or leading principles of thought. Easily satisfied himself, he has been unable to give satisfaction or even suggestive hints to earnest and anxious inquirers. The profound thinker is either decidedly religious in his temperament and views, or decidedly the reverse. Macaulay is neither. And hence, while he speaks on historical matters with authority and power, on all abstract questions he exhibits the feebleness without the modesty of a child. The voice and manner are those of a master, but the matter and spirit are those of an inapt and forward scholar.

Lord Bacon was a subject, certainly, more than worthy of all the powers of the author. The apparent contradictions in his character, the singular and humiliating events of his history, his position as the leader of a wide intellectual movement, his achievements as the broad-browed parent of modern method—the width of his mind, which reminds you of the first rude maps of the globe, where the breadth and the blunders are alike enormous—the oriental wealth and splendour of his fancy, recalling to you Solomon "speaking of trees, from the cedar to the hyssop," and issuing proverbs by the thousand—the proud, positive results which have sprung from his system have combined to render the woolsack on which sat he whom the poet calls

> The greatest, wisest, meanest of mankind,

more interesting and more magnificent in many men's view than the thrones of "Ormus or of Ind," and to make them think of an angel seated on a planet, and looking down in supreme dominion upon the subjected provinces of a universal intellectual empire.

To grapple with such a mind and character was a noble task, and Macaulay has undoubtedly brought to it all the resources of his knowledge, the strength of his ingenuity, and the energies of his style. But he has at the same time exposed himself to certain grave charges, into the proof of which we must now shortly enter.

Now, first, as in reference to Hastings and other equivocal characters, he has not painted Bacon well as a whole. He

has set the apparently contradictory parts of his character in violent and antithetical opposition to each other—opposition so violent as to produce a monstrous effect; he has not seen or shown to us any principle accounting for and unifying the whole. God does not make men on the plan of antithesis. Pterodactyles and all such contradictions of chaos are long extinct. Inconsistencies, of course, there are in all characters: but where a character is hollow and false, the intellectual power must be partially vitiated, and where the heart is extinct, the mind must have its flaws and feebleness too. Had Bacon been the "greatest," he never could have been the "meanest" of mankind. The charges which Macaulay so ably and unanswerably urges against his *morale* tell, in some measure, against his method of investigating truth. Who, if we may accommodate Scripture language, "can bring a warm system out of a cold nature, a true creed out of a false heart?" No, not one!

There never was any such mis-creation as a *great* bad man, although wonderful and extraordinary villains have abounded. A really great man cannot be bad—a bad man cannot be really great. Prove the greatness, and you disprove the badness—or prove the badness, and you shatter down the greatness. A great man may be defined as one living under a lofty ideal, and having power in part to realise it. But the presence of a lofty ideal proves the absence of systematic and cold-blooded depravity, of abject meanness, of cowardice, cruelty, or falsehood. All true greatness is more or less moral. The highest cherub *is* also the purest seraph. The player Shakspere was an infinitely better and greater man than the Chancellor Bacon, and would have died rather than have committed one of his viler deeds, or handled one piece of his unclean gold. The philosophers of Greece, whom Macaulay would crush under Bacon's feet, had many faults, but not the worst of them cuts such a disgraceful and contemptible figure as he; and does this furnish no *prestige* in favour of their intuitive and transcendental method?

The extraordinary and able men of no principle or heart, who abound in the history of the world, remind us of busts —all brow and no heart. They are the incarnations of mere understanding—having neither, if we may use Kant's language, the pure reason, which perceives the absolute as existence—nor the practical reason, which discerns it as moral law. The great are composed of a combination, more or less varied in its proportions, of the pure reason, the logical understanding, the

practical reason, and the imaginative sympathy. *They* are the composites, although the combination is definite, not contradictory. Whereas, the merely extraordinary man has the simple positive of understanding, added to a copious list of negatives. To this Bacon united the gift of a munificent fancy, not to speak of his multifarious knowledge and acquirements.

But, secondly, and chiefly, we charge Macaulay with greatly overrating Lord Bacon's philosophy, and with underrating, at the same time, the philosophies which preceded him. And here we mean out of his own mouth to condemn him. Now, to pursue him down his paper *seriatim*, we find him, as to the aim or end of the two philosophies, admitting, that while Bacon's sought solely the "relief of man's estate," that of the ancients aimed at "moral perfection." In other words, Bacon professed to cure corns, and Plato to heal consciences. Bacon wished to teach men to make better ships, or, as Macaulay has it, "better shoes;" and Plato to teach them to have nobler and happier souls. Bacon sought "fruit," perhaps ingrafted on rotten trees; whereas Plato and his school sought, although with imperfect success, to make the root of the tree sound, and its circulating sap pure. Bacon sought to make men better citizens of this hollow world; Plato to prepare them for the "City of God"—the everlasting mansions of the true, the spiritual, and the happy. How significant that Bacon died, in consequence of seeking to stuff a fowl with snow—an apt emblem of the coldness and comparative pettiness of his method, and rather a striking type, too, of the manner in which his ablest modern panegyrist has sought to embalm a cowardly nature in elegant, elaborate, and icy praise.

"*Although* with *im*perfect success." These words will be seized on by the Baconian, and turned against us. But, first, we intend, ere we close, to show that the success of Bacon's method has been exaggerated; secondly, we remember the words, "in great attempts 'tis glorious even to *fail;*" thirdly, to Plato and his direct or indirect influence, we may attribute all the *mere philosophic* spiritualism of the cultivated world—which, while "far *below* the good, is far *above* the great;" fourthly, Platonism was the herald of Christianity, and its failure lay in the want of some elements which Christianity supplied—namely, a perfect model, a supernatural power, and a permanent divine influence; fifthly, on the grounds on which Macaulay claims superiority to Bacon over the Platonic school, we might claim superiority for a tailor over Bacon or Plato either. But we may

leave the details of this startling preference, although *legitimately deducible* from our author's premises, to the imagination of our readers. And, sixthly, he forgets, or overshoots while remembering, the fact, that he is talking of the *aim* of the two systems, and not at this point of their actual results. To make man better may not be so practicable as to improve the strops of his razors, but surely even at the first blush it is a *loftier* attempt.

But, according to Macaulay, contradicting old Seneca, "the first shoemaker was a greater philosopher than Seneca himself." Had he said the "first maker of a foot," he would have been nearer the mark. Neither Seneca nor the aboriginal shoemaker strikes us as a very wonderful philosopher. Both only shaped out the ideal of greater artists, the one imperfectly that of the Plato, the Pythagoras, and the Zeno, who saw the vast superiority of the soul to the body, of the next life to this, and the other of that plastic power, which, in forming a foot, silently bade man, while he covered its nakedness, to emulate its symmetry and copy its curve. But dare Macaulay expect sympathy when denying Seneca's assertion that "philosophy *lies deeper* than inventing transparent windows, tubes for diffusing warmth, or shorthand?" Judging by this statement, we should prefer Seneca as an expounder of the ideal philosophy, to Macaulay as an illustrator of the utilitarian. We are certain that the "three books on Anger," contain nothing so contemptible as the preference he gives, by implication, to "the man who teaches us to use our hands," over him "whose object is to form our souls." Not in the pages of Combe, or Robert Chambers, or of that Benthamite school which Macaulay himself once assaulted, do we remember anything so grossly absurd, or which more helplessly sacrifices the unhappy cause committed to his advocacy.

What! a shorthand writer equal to a philosopher or a great orator—Woodfall above Burke, Gurney above Canning, or Macaulay seated at Highgate, and drinking in Coleridge's inspired accents, equal to the "old man eloquent." And yet, such abject trash, when printed in the *Edinburgh Review*, or republished by the "Historian of England," must gain unchallenged acceptance, and require this humble pen to dash it into exposure and contempt.

In the paragraph which follows, he throws out insinuations against Seneca's character, which require only two remarks. First, Seneca is no more to be taken as a fair type of the Platonic

philosophy, than Emerson of the system of Fichte, or Combe of Benthamism. He was the hard dreg of a Stoic, and the Stoic was only the stony similitude of a Platonist. And, secondly, should we accept this test of character in judging of Seneca's system, what is there to prevent us from applying it to Bacon's, upon the premises Macaulay has newly laid down, namely, that Bacon, if he *did* not, like Seneca, "meditate epigrammatic conceits about the evils of luxury in gardens, which moved the envy of sovereigns, rant about liberty, while fawning on the insolent and pampered freemen of a tyrant, nor celebrate the divine beauty of virtue with the same pen which had just before written a defence of the murder of a mother by a son"—nevertheless *did*, and that, too, under the light of Christianity in its full blaze, take bribes for justice, till corruption's own brazen brow grew pale, and her iron hand trembled; suffer the profligate minion of a monarch to influence his most solemn judicial decisions; pervert the old laws of England to the vilest purposes of tyranny, by "tampering with judges, and torturing a prisoner," who, like the laws, was venerable, innocent, and old—and, lastly, become the betrayer, and the public, voluntary, and malignant accuser, of his own principal friend and patron? It is from his hand, be sure, and not from Seneca's, that our author would expect the key of nature. The two succeeding paragraphs contain a caricature of the objects and results of ancient philosophy, and their sting might easily be extended to all metaphysics, and to all theology. Mr. Macaulay forgets what he had so recently stated, that one object of academical studies is to elevate and purify the soul—a purpose independent of objective results: he forgets that the fruit sought being of the rarest kind, and hanging on the topmost branches of the tree of knowledge, cannot be gathered without long labour, and that the maintenance of a lofty spiritualism, of an attitude of wonder and worship among the better minds of every succeeding age, is a richer result than all the possible discoveries made under the Baconian method. Who would set the history of patents above that of opinions? Because theologic science has not unriddled the mystery of a God, or explained the conditions or the localities of the future life, must the truths involved in such speculations, and the influences their agitation has exerted on the spiritual nature of man, be degraded in practical power below gas, the steam-engine, or the diving-bell? Are churches, missionary societies, great religious movements, high spiritual poems, and holy lives, not worthy "fruit"?—and these, under

God, we in this nineteenth century owe, not to the school of Bacon, but to that combination of the philosophy of Plato, and the divine teaching and working of Jesus, which constitutes the only theology, whether theoretic or practical, deserving the name —the theology of Taylor, Howe, Milton, and Coleridge.

The Baconian philosophy bears flowers and fruits in great abundance—and every year; but the deep thought of the ancient Greek mind, informed and warmed by the supernatural Sun of Christianity, like the aloe, brings forth, at long intervals, its precious blossoms, of which you may say with the poet—when you contrast them with more short-lived and earthy productions—"one blossom of Eden outblooms them all," and the fruit of which is everlasting. For why? Bacon sowed the thin soil of the finite and the present; Plato the deep loam of the permanent and the infinite. Bacon expected and received the return of an early crop of material results; Plato's harvest lay in the slow yield of souls. "Now the things seen are temporal, but the things unseen are eternal."

Macaulay next expresses a disappointed hope in the "Epicureans." They were, according to him, mutilated utilitarians. It was even wonderful that "Epicurus' style did not breed a Bacon." *They* approached the true and sensible notion of things, in "referring all happiness to bodily pleasure, and all evil to bodily pain." But, like the gods in whom they were said to believe, they were lazy, and preferred lolling in the sun to constructing Novum Organons. *Our* notion of their sense is increased by this. If all happiness lies in bodily pleasure, and all evil in bodily pain, it may be a question if it be not our "strength to sit still" to take the good the gods provide us, or to drink our hemlock in silence, instead of moving heaven and earth, and convulsing the spheres, in order to wheel round to our feet new varieties of the same mixed and eternal meal. It was reserved for Macaulay to trace the proud Baconian Tree, which some compare to the Tree of Life, with its "many manner of fruits, and its leaves for the healing of the nations," to a rejected acorn from the trough of Epicurus.

That an infection of despondency seemed to lie upon other shapes of the Grecian philosophy besides the Epicurean, is granted to their detractor. But he has not pointed out the element which would have dissipated this gloom. That was Christianity, with its supernatural discoveries of the immortality of man—of his intimate relations to God—and of the God-Man Mediator. The ancient philosophers saw the necessities and

cravings of man's immortal nature; they felt that to seek to supply these by temporal comforts were as insulting and absurd as to give rich food to a raging fever; they felt, some of them, that one great want of man was an Incarnation of the Godhead, and they had even a hope of his appearance—saw in some measure his "day afar off, and were glad," but it was only a dim prospect, after all, and they lived not to see the culmination of their systems, and the completion of their desires, in the divine Carpenter of Nazareth. Hence, their systems have an imperfect aspect—like the Sphinx or the Tower of Babel—and, because only half-finished, have been treated as ruins. But to call their despondency "contented" is unjust. If they sought moral perfection, and sought it sincerely, but found it not, how could they remain contented? Is even the maniac who tries to leap to the moon contented with his fall? On the contrary, the Baconian philosophy having made its bow to Christianity, and derived from it something of its liberal and unfettered spirit, has too often proceeded in its investigations to ignore its existence, or to treat its occasional protests with impatient scorn.

It is easy to enlarge on the errors of the schoolmen. But to charge these upon the ancient philosophers is as unfair as to confound Popery with Christianity. Scholasticism was the putrefaction of the old philosophy—deriving a twofold virulence from the coeval putrefaction of religion, or it might be termed the dotage and driveldom of the Grecian philosophy. But, though doomed to dote, that glorious thing was not doomed to die. In spite of Macaulay's pæan over its fall, it is alive and in full vigour still, and, surviving Bacon's system, may merge, like the Morning Star, only in the Sun of that divine vision which we, according to His promise, expect sooner or later to irradiate the evening of the world.

Mr. Macaulay, after comparing Bacon to Bonaparte—a comparison with two edges—proceeds to make the following extraordinary statement:—"The object of the new philosophy was the good of mankind, *in the sense* in which the *mass of* mankind always *understood*, and *will always* understand, the word good." Surely this gentleman was born to be a fatal friend to the fame of the Baconian system. What has been the object or "good" always hitherto sought or contemplated by the *mass* of mankind? Has it not been selfish gratification, in one or other of its myriad forms? Alas! for Bacon and his philosophy, if this was their object too! And alas! for man, if he is never to rise to a higher purpose; and if the

Baconian philosophy be merely a devil's wind to fan the sails of human selfishness to the end of time! Indeed, we are now at this point tempted to ask, if Mr. Macaulay be not, after all, conducting a long, insidious, and ironical argument against Bacon's idea and method, after he had, in the former part of the paper, triumphantly demolished and trampled on his personal character. We defy the bitterest opponent of our English sage to utter a severer sentence against his system than has his eloquent and seemingly sincere eulogist. Poor Bacon! has he not fared like a man who should sit down to have his features copied by an artist apparently friendly, and should continue to smile, well pleased, while on the other side of the canvas there was rising, to the tune of smothered laughter, the most hideous of caricatures?

But this suspicion—which would save the intellect at the expense of the honesty of the writer—fades away and becomes incredible, as we follow him a little farther. He goes on to contrast the estimates Plato and Bacon have respectively formed of the different branches of knowledge. Plato thought that the "great office of geometry was to discipline the mind, not to minister to the base wants of the body." Macaulay, on the other hand, sneers at "the abstract, essential, eternal truths" of this science, but passes over the great objection to its study, which is, that men accustomed to mathematical evidence become often incapable of appreciating or receiving any other. There is a mist around the region of mathematics colder and denser than that of metaphysics; and he who finds the darkness of problems clear, will by and by wink and be struck blind by the blaze of day. But surely the idea of mathematics propounded by Plato is far loftier than the other—unless Meyer on *Mensuration* can be compared to Newton's *Principia.*

In talking of their estimates of astronomy, Macaulay grants that both agree in condemning the astronomy which then existed, and in desiderating a higher and purer; but, strange to say, he prefers Bacon's "living astronomy"—which seems to have been nothing else than *astrology*—to Plato's, which was a fine and large idealism. Bacon aspired to know the "nature and the *influences* of the heavenly bodies as they really are;" Plato, to attain to an astronomy to which the "stars are like the figures which a geometrician draws on the sand—an astronomy 'independent of the stars.'" Suppose either of these imaginary astronomies attainable; which of the two, we ask, were the nobler? Suppose both visionary; which vision is the grander

of the two? Our common astronomy may be compared to a measurement of the dimensions of the human *brain;* Bacon's to a knowledge of its relations to the body and the nervous system; and Plato's to the study of the mind, of which the brain is but the organ. The stars may be called the developments of "God's Own Head:" our common astronomers number them, and take their weights and sizes; Bacon wishes to know how they are connected with our every-day life and fortunes; Plato, to read the divine idea—the large thought and purpose of God—inscribed on them in legible fire.

It seems to us that in this science we are fast approaching a point where we need the guidance rather of a new Plato than of a new Bacon or Newton. The telescope of Lord Rosse has sounded our present astronomy to its real depths. Few more great prizes are reserved, we suspect, in that starry sea. We have attained the knowledge that the stars are old, that they are of one stuff, and that there is no visible end to their numbers. What more of any moment, in this direction, by our present methods, is ever likely to be reached by us? It is like walking through a pine forest of vast extent and uniform aspect: a few miles tire and satisfy us. So now, the news of "stars, stars, stars," pouring on us in everlasting succession—all *like* each other, all distant, all inscrutable, and ever silent, the moral history of all unknown—produces very little effect, and the midnight heavens of modern astronomy become again, as to the eye of childhood, a mighty and terrible pageant or procession, the meaning and the purpose, the whither and the whence, of which we do not understand. And we are tempted to say to astronomers, as they prate of their new firmaments, and planets, and comets, "We knew something like this long ago; can ye not give us some light on the meaning of these distant orbs, or read us off some worthy lessons of moral interest from that ever-widening but never-clearing page?" And to cry out to the stars, "Speak as well as shine, ye glorious mutes in the halls of heaven! Shed down on some selected and favoured ear the true meaning of your mystic harmonies! Hieroglyphics, traced by the finger of God on the walls of night, when shall the Daniel arrive to interpret you, and to tell us whether ye contain tidings of hope or of despair? Star-gazers have looked at you long enough, and mathematicians weighed and measured you; when shall the eye—the Rossian eye of a true seer—lift itself up to your contemplation, and extract the heart of your mystery? If not, men may soon turn away from you in disappointment, and

look with as much hope on the bright foam-bells of an autumn ocean as on you, the froth of immensity."

Plato's opinions on medicine are next brought forward against him; and yet in nothing do we perceive greater proof of his profound sagacity. True, he pushes his views to excess; but under the veil of his extravagant statements we see an idea which is gaining ground, and shall yet become universal—that medicine, as it began in, shall return to, surgery; that, as a barber was the first, he shall be the last physician; that in a body, as well as in a mind diseased, the patient best ministers to himself; that the words, "Physician, heal thyself," may be freely rendered, "Cure thee of quackery by ceasing to be a physician at all;" and that nature, strong in her own resources, coincides with Plato in crying out, "Throw physic to the dogs; I'll none of it." This belief, having sent on before it its imperfect forerunners, of homœopathy and hydropathy, is following them in full force, and in a higher form, and threatens soon to turn out of doors the "Royal Academy of Physicians," to celebrate a universal jubilee—illumination at the death of quackery—and to burn drugs, like demons, in a blaze of consuming fire. Honour to old Plato for having, by one glance of his eye, seen the quackery of ages *through*, and *down* to its dying day.

Grasping always at the ideals of things, Plato saw that all true legislation must propound to itself a lofty end, and he proclaims that end to be the "virtue of the subject." This was the thought of Moses too, and the theocracy of Israel was its accomplishment. It were easy to prove that it was also the idea of Christ, although its realisation was *deferred*, and he did not at that time restore the kingdom to Israel. It is certainly the idea of Millennial Christianity; but Mr. Macaulay scouts it as utopian, and prefers the line of legislation recommended by Bacon, and, alas! acted on by the majority of human governors, which has for its watchword the low word "well-being;" which acknowledges no virtues but industry and submission, and no God but Mammon; which is careful to regulate and derive revenue from stews, but never intermeddles with the education of souls; which tolerates every species of corruption so long as it is profitable, and the money derived from it does not *smell;* which washes the outside of the platter, whitens the sepulchre, and decks the corpse, but neglects the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy, and faith; and seeks (not in vain) to divorce human legislation from eternal justice. Let the praises of Baconian legislation be sung by mightier voices than ours—

by the whirlwinds of anarchy, the blood-red trumpets of revolution, the cries of tormented and fugitive slaves, and by that crash of all-existing governments, which may form the first thunder-step of Him who is to come, and who, in pronouncing doom against them, may make *this* the conclusive charge: "Ye did *not* make it the principal end of your legislation to make men virtuous; ye turned my father's house into a house of merchandise, nay, a den of thieves; and ye must be scourged —*hence!*"

An antithetical comparison is introduced between the philosophy of Plato and that of Bacon, which, as it is short, we may quote:—"The aim of the Platonic philosophy was to exalt man into a God; the aim of the Baconian philosophy was to provide man with what he requires while he continues to be man. The aim of the Platonic philosophy was to raise us far above vulgar wants; the aim of the Baconian philosophy was to supply our vulgar wants. The former aim was noble; but the latter was attainable. Plato drew a good bow; but, like Acestes in *Virgil*, he aimed at the stars, and, therefore, though there was no want of strength or skill, the shot was thrown away. His arrow was indeed followed by a track of dazzling radiance, but it struck nothing. Bacon fixed his eye on a mark which was placed on the earth, and within bow-shot, and he hit it in the white. The philosophy of Plato began in words, and ended in words; the philosophy of Bacon began in observations, and ended in arts."

Let us try a parallel on the other side of the question, which, if not so pointed, is much more true. The aim of the Baconian philosophy was to make the dungeon of man's irrecoverable captivity as comfortable as possible, to ventilate it well, to loose everything except the chains, to cleanse the floors, clear the windows of cobwebs, and to whisper the while to the bondage, *Esto perpetua;* that of the Platonic was to set the lawful but hopeful prisoner free. The aim of the Baconian philosophy was to cherish, expand, and cultivate the animal and intellectual nature of man; that of the Platonic was to strengthen and purify the spiritual, which is the germ of the Godhead in humanity. The aim of the Baconian philosophy was to "supply man's vulgar wants," and leave him content as a sated sloth with the supply; that of Plato was to suggest the thrilling thought, that there are instincts and wants in man which earth and time cannot satisfy, and which, with their silent uplifted fingers, point to immortality.

The aim of the Baconian philosophy was, even if *attainable*,

not very *noble*—but attainable it was not, since the sensuous, as well as the spiritual, nature of man continually cries, "Give, give." Bacon's system, although it had a "New Atlantis," had no "Mahometan paradise" annexed to it; the aim of Plato, partaking of the eternal, demands the field of the future for its development, and disdains the petty geographical gauges by which it has been hitherto tried. Plato "aimed at the sun," like Hercules of old; but Macaulay has not, with all his "thunder," broken the "shaft," which is still travelling upwards with unabated speed in the heaven-sent breeze of Christianity, and shall hit that far "white" in due time. Bacon's arrow has not pierced entirely through even his broad targe—this world. The "philosophy of Bacon began in observations and ended in arts;" Plato's began in instincts, and shall end in a Daedalean crop of men.

Macaulay comes, in fine, to the question on which he lays most stress—that of the results of the two philosophies. On this point we have touched already, but must be permitted another word. Now, that many and wonderful results have sprung from the pursuit of the Baconian plan of philosophising, is conceded at once. But are they, after all, equal to the panegyrics bestowed on them? Are they not principally *mechanical?* Have they made man, as a whole, much happier, wiser, or better? What is "morality," or "moral obligation," without "grounds"—and Bacon has, according to Macaulay, laid down no such grounds. He says, "he loved to dwell on the power of the Christian religion to effect much that the ancient philosophers only promised." This might have been only a compliment; and how easy it were to turn round and to say, "the objections to the ancient philosophy you urge, may be urged, with equal force, against the Christian faith—where do we find the moral perfection at which it aimed?—where the faultless men it sought to produce?—has it not been a sublime failure?" And so we grant it has; unless you admit the facts of a great future, to which it points, and of a supernatural intervention, which it promises. And what we demand for Christianity, we demand also for the Platonic philosophy. Like it, it has done much, but not hitherto in proportion to the infinite scale it has itself fixed. Yet we are willing to weigh even its present products against Macaulay's elaborate list of the results of the Baconian method. "*That* has *lengthened* life" (Macaulay hopes, we suppose, to live longer than Methuselah!), "mitigated pain" (Christianity has no solace in it equal to chloroform!),

"extinguished diseases" (by creating new ones), "increased the fertility of the soil" (to the benefit of the serf, eh?), "given new securities to the mariner" (the polar star shone and the needle trembled before Bacon was born), "furnished new arms to the warrior" (is *this* a service to the human race? must the name of Bacon be written in blood?), "spanned great rivers and estuaries with bridges of form unknown to our fathers" (what an achievement! the rainbow is nothing to it!), "guided the thunderbolt innocuously from heaven to earth" (shall we never hear the last of that poor, tattered, tell-little kite of Franklin's, the Elijah's mantle of modern philosophers?), "lighted up the night with the splendour of the day" (was it not so also in the halls of Persepolis and the palaces of Babylon, or is all the glory of night included in gas?), "extended the range of the human vision, accelerated motion, annihilated distance, facilitated intercourse, enabled man to descend into the sea, soar into the air, penetrate into the noxious recesses of the earth, traverse the land in cars without horses;" and so on he goes, like the hack orator at a Watt or Mechanics' Institute, through the wearisome round of railways, diving-bells, balloons, safety lamps, etc. Splendid toys, truly! Childish things, fitting our present state of advancement. Nay, rather *conductors*, laid out and waiting for the electric influences of a better era. But to speak of them as *ends*, as objects, as living things, as aught but dead trifles, till the shadow of the divine be made to fall on them, and the power of the divine to propel them, and the spirit of the divine to animate them, is intolerable from one pretending to be a philosopher. We throw into the scale over against them the highest philosophy, poetry, and theology of the last two centuries in Britain, Germany, and America, all of which has been coloured by the genius, and more or less inspired by the spirit, of Plato, and also the deep spiritual effects and moral movements which have sprung from these, and ask which is likely to kick the beam? And, if it be said that we are unfairly adding Christianity as a make-weight to Platonism, we reply that the one is, in our notion, the other fulfilled—the other *Deified*, yet practicalised; and that we have a right to rate the system we defend at its *best*.

The philosophy of Bacon has sounded the ocean, but it has ignored the profounder depth of the infinite in the soul of man. It has brought down the lightnings on its rod, but they have come reluctantly, and departed as much a mystery as ever. It has told the number, but not the meaning, of the stars, which

roll on in their courses as inscrutable to us as they were to the Chaldean shepherds. Treating man as a cultivable ape, it has made his outward condition more comfortable; it hurries him along the path to his grave on railways; it smooths the harsh, outward edges of his intercourse with his fellow-man, but it leaves his heart as hard as it found it; it satisfies not, nor tries to satisfy, one of the deep thirsts of his moral nature. It has not cast a gleam of light upon the dark problems of his being, such as birth, sin, madness, or death. It casts not, nor seeks to cast, a ray upon the life beyond; it leaves a cloud of utter darkness upon his future progress on earth; and it neglects the care, if not denies the existence, of that immortal instinct which points up the poorest scion of humanity to his Father in heaven. It is of the earth, earthy; nor is that earth regarded as God's footstool, or as the springboard from which undying souls are to take their bound upwards, but as the eternal womb, homestead, and grave of certain erect compositions of clay, made, worked, and at last buried in night, by a mere mechanical power. Should [1] once more the Baconian appeal to the "Great Exhibition," and say, "Behold the triumph of my principles there," we answer—the splendour of the instance is granted; we saw there "the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, in a moment of time;" but not for the gift, instead of the sight, of all this magnificence, would we bend down before the golden calf. That exhibition was, after all, an exhibition of the works of *man's* industry; if we would see the works of God's industry, we must look elsewhere—to those books which his Spirit has inspired, and to those men who bear his image, and fight his battles. Millions flocked to see this great sight; but there are sentences in Plato, and far more in John, one of which is worth the whole magnificent medley. And yet, were a new truth of still more compact significance and grandeur, from the same source, inscribed upon a pillar, and the existence of that pillar announced to the ends of the earth, how few would travel to read the same. So it is, but so it shall not always be. Nay, it appears to us that the Great Exhibition brought the Baconian system to a point; it produced all that it *could* do for humanity—and may not this bright pinnacle of human deed and skill have shone across the gulf, as a signal to the superior and supernatural power, seeing in it man's splendid impotence, and gilded woe, to take his case, and the remainder of his otherwise hopeless destiny, by and by, into *his own* all-

[1] This was written when the Great Exhibition was going on in London.

wise, powerful, and merciful *hands?* The cry of Plato was for an avatar, and a fuller revelation of the Deity. That was fulfilled in Christianity, but Christianity, in unison with creation, is beginning to cry aloud, in her turn, for a farther and a final apotheosis. The words of John Foster are seldom to be despised, and let both Baconian and Platonic Christian hear him with attention, as he says, "Religion is utterly incompetent to reform the world, till it is armed with some new and most mighty powers—till it appears in a *new* and *last* dispensation."

Our space is exhausted, else we would have had rich pickings of absurdity and weakness in the closing parts of Macaulay's essay—where, for instance, he tells us gravely, "that the knowledge of the theory of logic has no tendency to make men good reasoners," an assertion equivalent to "the knowledge of the theory of grammar has no tendency to make men good grammarians," or, "a man may be a very good French scholar, without studying French;" or where he reduces Bacon's claims to absolute zero, by telling us that his "rules are not wanted, because, in truth, they only tell us to do what we are all doing;" or where, closing his estimate of what Bacon has after all done, he calls him a "person who first called the public attention to an inexhaustible mine of wealth, which had been utterly neglected, and was accessible by that road alone, and thus caused that road which had been previously trodden by peasants and higglers" (Platos and Aristotles? nay, Johns and Pauls?), "to be frequented by a higher kind of travellers." By-ends Bacon, we suppose, Demas Dumont, Save-all Joe Hume, Hold-the-World Bentham, Young Atheist Holyoake, Feel-the-Skull Combe, and My-Lord-Time-server Mr. Macaulay.

MACAULAY AS A HISTORIAN[1]

We have repeatedly discussed Macaulay's merits and defects as a thinker, poet, *litterateur*, and orator. We have never yet, however, had the opportunity of examining, in any separate paper, his character as a historian. This is now furnished us by the appearance of the third and fourth volumes of his *History of England*, and we proceed, with perfect candour and impartiality, to record our impressions.

Historians may be divided into the following classes—(1), the bold recounter of facts, or the Mechanical Historian; (2), the Controversial Historian; (3), the Descriptive and Rhetorical Historian; (4), the Philosophical Historian; and (5), the writer who, by combining some of the qualities of all or most of these, becomes the Ideal or Poetic Historian. The Mechanical Historian differs very little from the old almanac compiler—his sole object is to accumulate facts; but how to show their bearings on each other, to compute their relative value, to measure their symbolic size, to generalise them into broad principles, or to heat them into eloquence, he knows not—a fact is to him what a flower was to Peter Bell:—

> A primrose by the river's brim,
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more.

The Controversial historian is one who, setting out with a party formula in his hands, is less anxious to mirror truth than to twist it to his own preconceived notions. He hurries along the thread to get at the knots of history, and his works are mostly special pleadings, more or less powerful in proportion to his ability, but always narrow and one-sided. The Descriptive and Rhetorical historian belongs to no party except the party of effect,—has no principles but the principles of art, or at least is often ready to sacrifice what principles he may have to the emphasis of clauses, the music of cadences, and the flow of balanced and beautiful periods; facts, too, he casts like old silver pieces into his mint, and if he can give them a new stamp and burnish, cares not although their weight, form, and pressure be materially altered. The Philosophical historian, on the

[1] From the *Scottish Review*, April 1856.

other hand, sees little in history but a procession of principles,—he looks almost entirely to the subjective, seldom to the objective; and, instead of painting the body and the bloom, he traces the bones of his subject,—thus, although not in the original sense of the words, "seeing the invisible," and ignoring the "things seen." The highest form of history has often been attempted, although not yet fully exemplified. It aims at uniting accuracy with selection and generalisation of facts,—stern attachment to principle with catholic charities and sympathies,—truth of description with eloquence,—stern analysis and profound thought with that poetic imagination which invests all things, even abstractions, with beauty, unity, and life. He that approaches nearest to the full combination of these qualities, approaches, of course, nearest to the Ideal or Poetic historian.

In looking at the historians of the past, we find (although in many of them the characteristics we have mentioned are blended, and run into each other) several specimens of each class. Herodotus, the "father of history," was little else than a reciter of bare facts, without selection as to their quality. Being the earliest of historians, however, his facts were often so strange and romantic that their mere recital was poetry, and he became sometimes, without knowing or suspecting that he was, a fine describer, principally because he allowed events to describe themselves. Thucydides united much of the philosophical thinker, and of the political reasoner, to great powers of description and rhetoric; but wanted elasticity of movement, clearness of style, and completeness of effect. Xenophon was rather an elegant novelist than a historian; and although his Anabasis be a pleasing episode, it gives no promise of the epic grandeur of a great history. Polybius belonged, on the whole, to the Mechanical school. The fragments which have been preserved of Sallust give you the impression of a vigorous painter and sententious moraliser, with a strong dash of the special pleader, rather than of a philosopher, a judge, or a man of true historical imagination. Livy is entirely an eloquent artist,—his sole object is to write what people will admire,—his narratives are often as fictitious as his descriptions, and his descriptions are often as unreal as the speeches he puts into the mouths of his generals. Tacitus, of all ancient historians, approached nearest the ideal of his art. Although not practised in that habit of severely sifting facts and evidence, which is now essential to a writer of history, he is eminently a lover of truth, and never

seems to be playing his reader false,—his prejudices in favour of Trajan and Agricola give no more than an agreeable *animus* to his writings,—his descriptions are unrivalled in their knotty force, in their laconic compression, and in their combination of general grandeur of effect, with minute fidelity; and his penetration into the characters, the mental workings, and the passions of men, is as accurate as it is profound. His great deficiency, besides the want of modern culture and training, lies in his style, which is frequently obscure, involved, curt, inverted, and never attains that easy flow which adds so great a charm to the writings of many inferior historians. As Dante to Virgil and Tasso, is Tacitus to Livy and Robertson, at once incomparably more powerful, and very much inferior in popularity.

In our own country we find all the varieties of the tribe-historian. Goldsmith and Smollett are good specimens of the merely Narrative school,—only the former tells his story in a manner so natural, and in language so unconsciously felicitous, that, whether he be narrating falsehoods, or uttering the feeblest of common-places, you cannot but listen delighted; and are tempted to cry, "If this be not history, it is something better." Controversial historians we have many,—such as Whitaker, Goodall, Stewart, and Bell, the four champions of Mary, Queen of Scots,—Malcolm Laing, her strong-minded and acute defamer,—George Brodie, the opponent of Hume,—and M'Crie and Hallam, who, while presenting other historical aspects, are chiefly remarkable for the mastery with which they grapple with special party questions, the admiration they concentrate on certain partisan characters, and the strong, although in Hallam's case the subdued, bias which runs through all their writings. Examples of the Descriptive and Rhetorical historian are too numerous to be mentioned. Robertson may, perhaps, be regarded as the most thorough, if not the most brilliant, specimen of this species. In his mind, the *What* always stands inferior in importance to the *How*,—the matter is less regarded than the manner,—truth must often bow before beauty and effect. "What is the chaff to the wheat," says the prophet,—"What is the wheat to the chaff," says the Scotch historian, if that chaff be well-arranged and softly coloured with the light of fancy,—what is the truthful termination of a battle, or negotiation, compared to the musical close of a sentence,—perish facts and principles, provided periods be safe! Not that Robertson meant to lie; on the contrary, he was willing to speak truth,

provided his clauses and his cadences did not suffer. And, certainly, he was an enchanting narrator. Who that ever read can forget his picture of the death of Mary, Queen of Scots, or his account of the discovery of America by Columbus? In Hume, and Gibbon, we find a combination of the Philosophical and the Descriptive historian, although in both we desiderate a supreme attachment to truth, and in both we see too much of the partisan. Hume assumes the attitude of a cool and neutral observer, but retains it only till liberty or religion cross his path, when he flies at each as at his natural game; and although his cold temperament forbids a display of fury, it does not restrain expressions of spite. His style is loose and unidiomatic, but abounds in felicitous touches, in which the extreme of art is concealed under the appearance of artlessness. Of heart and genuine imagination he is entirely destitute. Gibbon had what Hume wanted, genius of an Oriental type, and of Oriental richness, although his taste was like that of the Orientals, deficient in delicacy and refinement. This was one reason why the severe simplicity of Christianity repelled him, and why he found Mahometanism, with its sensuous splendours, gorgeous fictions, and false unity, more attractive. That he took a true or profoundly philosophical view of the causes of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, De Quincey has denied, and with much power pled the contrary. His attempt to account for the progress of Christianity, although admirably managed, entirely fails; and his great work, which at a distance towers grandly up, like Constantinople under the morning sun,—like that city, too, when approached more closely, reveals many a beggarly street, and many a rotten edifice. A great work, nevertheless, it is; the greatest historical work in the world. Its style has been finely compared by Landor to the splendid colouring of the clouds which surround the setting sun,—its march is not the strut of a martinet, but the stately step of a giant,—it unites the feeling of reality inspired by history with the charm and sorcery of an Arabian tale; and of all histories hitherto written, it alone deserves the name of an epic.

This present portion of the century has produced, besides many other historians, Arnold, Alison, Carlyle, De Quincey, and Macaulay. In Arnold met all the mechanical, all the moral, and many of the mental qualifications of the true historian. He had learning and research,—he had a passion for truth, which has rarely been paralleled in strength and sincerity; and he had a profound belief in God and in Christianity. What he wanted

were, first, long life to permit him to execute his colossal plans; and, secondly, greater compass and brilliance, along with sagacity and earnestness of mind. Of Alison's merits and faults it is unnecessary here to dwell. If not a great, he has certainly written a large history; the largest, we believe, except the *Universal History*, extant. Carlyle, like Gibbon, does not *say*, but *sing*, his history, although in wilder, fiercer, and more scald-like strains. His *History of the French Revolution* has been called an epic. It is in reality a succession of lyrical poems, like the rhapsodies of Homer ere they were collected and unified by Pisistratus. And what powerful, although jagged and irregular prose-odes, the chapters on the *French Revolution* are! Truly Titanic utterances, worthy of that Titanic contest, when the nations were angry, and blood was flowing up to the very horse bridles. Were we to live ten thousand years, we could not forget the wild raptures of the first reading of these three volumes,—how history became transfigured in our sight into the highest poetry,—how the light of imagination glorified the abyss foaming with revolutionary blood,—how there hurried along before us, as in successive dissolving views, the storming of the Bastile, the procession of the National Assembly, the march to Versailles, the death-bed of Mirabeau, the Flight of the King, the Reign of Terror, the Massacres of September, the guillotining of Danton, the fall of Robespierre; and how, as strong passion must find relief, or burst its barriers, our enthusiasm rushed impetuously to vent, and, as it were, bleed itself in a written panegyric on the magical powers which had so enthralled us. We linger the longer in recalling these days, as some of the subsequent works of this author have excited in us very different emotions.

It may be wondered that we name De Quincey as a historian, since he has written no regular historical work, only certain scattered chapters and fragments of history. But these, we venture to say, reveal in him more of the essential elements of a great historian than have been united in any other author. His "Cæsars," his "Revolt of a Tartar Tribe," his "Joan of Arc," his "Spanish Nun," and many other papers, discover the true spirit of research, the well-digested learning, the breadth and minuteness of vision, the philosophical impartiality, the measured march of eloquent narrative, the consummate clearness, and the deep glow, which form between them the ideal writer of history. To all these De Quincey adds an imagination superior to Gibbon's in elevation and solid grandeur. What a pity that he has never attempted to grasp some broad historical theme, commensurate

with his learning, his understanding, and his genius; and that now his declining years forbid the prospect of any new effort. Dear to many of the Muses has this extraordinary man been, but peculiarly dear to Clio; and it is for ever to be regretted that he did not more exclusively attach himself to her service.

Macaulay has often been called "the lucky." And in nothing do we see his pre-eminent good fortune more than in his selection of the history of England for his theme. The chances against this subject coming fresh into his hands were at one time considerable. Had Sir James MacIntosh accomplished his purpose of writing the history of England, Macaulay would certainly, partly in awe and partly in love for that eminent man, have avoided the task,—a task for which he was, at the same time, much better qualified than Sir James, so far, at least, as elasticity and brilliance were concerned. But MacIntosh having never executed his design, Macaulay might be said to receive it in legacy; and a rich legacy it has proved. He was unquestionably as well fitted to be the chronicler of his country's *outer* story, as Boswell to write the life of Johnson, or Scott to paint the manners of Caledonia. His boundless accomplishments, his eloquent style, his intimacy not only with books and records bearing on the history of England, but with men who had become depositaries of traditionary information, and were living authorities,—his strong direct John Bullism of understanding, even his portly prejudices in favour of all that was English, his connection through his father with Scotland, his liberal feelings as a Whig toward Ireland, the part he had played in parliamentary politics, the practical knowledge he had acquired in the War Office and in India, all united in marking him out for our most interesting and popular, if not our most philosophical, most impartial, and final historian. Some, indeed, there were, who put in some strong preliminary objections and caveats. They questioned, first of all, the depth and comprehension of his mind, his possession of the true philosophic faculty. They doubted if he had much sympathy with the more earnest and lofty elements of human nature. They questioned his impartiality, and maintained that his essays proved him to be rather a lover of the *telling* than of the true. They ventured to doubt if he were a master of historic proportion, and to fear that his love of minute detail and preserved gossip would lead him astray. And they hinted that his style would not easily be toned down to that moderation which suits a long history; and that the work, while interesting and eloquent in parts, would be fatiguing as a whole.

Some six years ago the first two volumes of the work appeared, and were hailed with acclamation—a feeling which has been, we believe, not much lessened by the two additional volumes, under whose unparalleled issue the press has recently been groaning. We shall now proceed, simply, to daguerreotype the impressions made on our mind by the perusal of the two volumes, premising, first, that we have not read a single critique on them; and secondly, that, considering their enormous sale, as well as the numerous extracts from them which have appeared in the newspapers, we shall give no quotations of any length.

And, first, the fears of many, as to the want of continuous and cumulative interest, have been put to flight, partly by the two first volumes, and still more by those before us, which, if not so riveting as some passages in the former, are quite as entertaining as a whole. Each volume reads like a novel. This incessant interest is produced by a diversity of artistic methods, partly by a deliberate sinking down, an artificial carelessness and arranged disorder of style—(the repetition, for example, of the same words in the same sentence; the closing of long and laboured paragraphs, not as you expected, with a rolling climax, but with a quiet short period, etc.)—partly by the skilful alternation of historical subjects, partly by the interposition, at proper intervals, of anecdotes, incidents, or brief literary sketches and criticisms, and partly by the glimpses he is constantly giving us of the private and domestic life of men in the past. His book, in fact, includes in it several kinds of composition; the history, the memoir, the political disquisition, the criticism, the antiquarian treatise, and the materials of the *Ana*. And instead of cramming his miscellaneous information, as some historians do, into notes, he weaves it into the tissue of the text. He carries on five or six distinct histories abreast, and has, besides, a very fair proportion of what must be called conjectural history, *i.e.*, pure fiction. To call the interest of the work a suction were wrong, because suction implies unity, the unity of a maelström. Macaulay's interest may be compared to a succession of rising and sinking waves, breeze-stirred, and bearing on the bark irresistibly to the harbour. Coleridge's "Marinere" held men by his "glittering eye," a magic centred in, and radiating from a point. Macaulay holds his readers by the varied play and changing expressions of his face. He wields a fascination, but it is rather the fascination of great talent, laboriously exerting itself to sway the mind, than it is that quick, quiet, potent spell, exerted over the inmost

soul by the magic of genius. He always interests, often rouses, but seldom melts, and never thrills. He instructs the intellect, fills the memory, delights the fancy; but he seldom subdues the heart, and never rules the imagination.

With regard to impartiality, that, on the whole, has been better preserved than was expected, particularly in the third and fourth volumes. To the manifest scoundrels of all parties, he is most Rhadamanthine in his execution of justice—and as he seems rather to like this office, it must be satisfactory for him to find that never were scoundrels more plentiful than in the age of King James and William. In some parts of these volumes he leads us through a whole gallery of miscreants, and shows us here a Claverhouse, reeking with Covenanting blood—and there a Stair, croaking like a raven in hideous joy over the massacre of Glencoe; here a despicable Russell, intriguing with James while serving William; and there a coarse coxcomb, like Tyrconnell, storming and blaspheming in his drunken ire; here a weak Shrewsbury, seized with a remorse as contemptible as his crime; and there a Marlborough, ablest and basest of men, stained with a thousand treacheries, and in whose character you know not whether more to loathe the liar, to admire the general, or to despise the miser; here a Breadalbane, the prince and paragon of shufflers; and there a James II., in whom a weakness and superstition approaching idiocy, are not sufficient to excuse cruelty, tyranny, cowardice, and the spirit of an assassin, not to speak of the hundred minor ruffians, the Penns, Fenwicks, Friends, Fullers, and Rookwoods, who are also consigned by a stern and rapid etching to immortal infamy. On the other hand, he has done full justice to the few good or tolerable characters whom the time produced,—to Montague, Portland, Somers, Boufflers, Leslie, Tillotson, William and Mary, and it is not his fault that the most of these were Whigs. His hero, of course, is William, and his portrait of that wonderful person, with the lips of ice, and the look and the heart of fire, the thin worn figure, the determined unconquerable soul—

> Which fretted the puny body to decay,
> And o'er-informed its tenement of clay—

—who was never so great as when defeated, and never so terrible as when *down;* with his asthma and cough, his cold short answers, his predestinarianism, which, in him, became the "mild teacher of charity," his unrivalled diplomatic tact, his love of Holland and of Mary,—is admirable, and proves its truth by its masterly execution. Mary is his heroine, and

surely she shines above that troubled and treacherous age, like a "sunbeam on a sullen sea," and in her personal charms, her gracious manners, her conciliating disposition, her practical good sense, and her mild deep piety, stands alone amidst the Queens of England, and is approached only by the present illustrious occupant of the throne. While agreeing generally with Macaulay's estimates of character, and admiring the execution of most of his portraits, we are compelled to state some exceptions. We think that his reprobation of Stair's conduct in the Glencoe business, is not sufficiently strong. He pleads the example of others, and the spirit of the age in palliation, and says that Stair's motive was his intense desire to civilise the Highlands, by extirpating the lawless Highlanders. But that this transaction went far beyond the spirit of that age, is proved by the cry of horror it awakened through the length and breadth of the land, when its particulars were fully known. It was not merely the fact of the massacre, but the treachery, cold-blooded cruelty, breach of hospitality and family ties, and the infernal falsehood connected with it, that roused the nation and the world against it,—it was "murder under trust"—the worst thing done in the worst way. And the charge against Stair is, that he not only commanded the massacre, but organised and in spirit presided over *every one* of its disgusting and horrible details. One could conceive no more appropriate punishment for the guilty soul of the statesman, than that it should be condemned for ever to haunt that gloomy glen, or from the mouth of Ossian's cave be compelled continually to contemplate the road up which the fugitives rushed through the snows of that dread February morn, and in the sounds of the Cona from below to hear the everlasting echo of the voice of blood, the cry of insatiable vengeance.

The battle of Killiecrankie is well described, but his account of the death of Clavers comes to a rather "lame and impotent conclusion." Surely he should have given one stamp of indignation on the grave of the oppressor ere he bid him farewell. Macaulay is half a Scot, but the Scottish blood in his veins has come through a Highland, not a Lowland channel, else it would have boiled far more fiercely against "Dark John of the battles," the despicable and heartless murderer of John Brown. Perhaps it is to this Highland extraction, too, that we are to trace his spite at Macpherson, whom in his essays, and in these volumes, he takes every opportunity to decry. Were the Macphersons and Macaulays ever at feud; and did the historian lose his great

great grandmother in some onslaught made on the Hebrides, by the progenitors of the pseudo-Ossian? Macpherson, as a man, we respect not, and we fear the greater part of Ossian's poems can be traced no farther than his teeming brain. Nor are we careful to defend his poetry from the common charges of monotony, affectation, and fustian. But we deem Macaulay grossly unjust in his treatment of his genius, and its results, and can fortify our judgment by that of Sir Walter Scott and Professor Wilson—two men, as far superior to Macaulay in knowledge of the Highlands and Highland song, and in genuine poetic taste, as they were in original imagination. The former says, "Macpherson was certainly a man of high talents, and his poetic powers are honourable to his country." Wilson, in an admirable paper in *Blackwood* for November, 1839, while admitting many faults in Ossian, and ridiculing Blair's over-estimate, eloquently proclaims the presence in his strains of much of the purest, most pathetic, and most sublime poetry, instancing, among others, the "Address to the Sun," as the "highest poetry," equal to anything in Homer or Milton. Both these great writers have paid Macpherson a higher compliment still, they have imitated him, and the speeches of Allan Macaulay, Ranald MacEagh, and Elspeth MacTavish, in the *Novels*, and such articles in *Blackwood* as "Cottages," "Hints for the Holidays," and "A Glance at Selby's Ornithology," are all coloured by familiarity with Ossian's style. Best of all, the Highlanders, as a nation, have accepted Ossian as their bard; he is as much the poet of Morven, as Burns is of Coila, and it is as hopeless to dislodge the one from the Highland, as the other from the Lowland heart. The true way to learn to appreciate Ossian's poetry is not to hurry, as Macaulay seems to have done, in a steam-boat from Glasgow to Oban, and thence to Balahulish and Glencoe, and thence to Inverness and Edinburgh; but it is to live for years under the shadow of the Grampians, to wander through lonely moors, amidst drenching mists and rain, to hold trystes with thunder-storms on the summit of savage hills, to bathe in sullen tarns after nightfall, to lie over the ledge and dip one's fingers in the spray of cataracts, to plough a solitary path into the heart of forests, and to sleep and dream for hours amidst their sunless glades, on twilight hills to meet the apparition of the winter moon rising over snowy wastes, to descend by her ghastly light precipices where the eagles are sleeping, and returning home to be haunted by night visions of mightier mountains, wider desolations, and giddier descents,—experience

somewhat like this is necessary to constitute a true "Child of the Mist," and to give the full capacity of appreciating the shadowy, solitary, pensive, and magnificent spirit which tabernacles in Ossian's poetry. This was in part the experience of Wilson, but has not certainly been that of Macaulay, who, at the best, is a degenerate descendant of the mountains, and who has neither (as we shall see afterwards) adequately described Highland scenery, nor appreciated Highland genius.

It has sometimes been charged against Macaulay, that he has little sympathy with religious enthusiasm, and that he is somewhat of a latitudinarian in these matters. We fear the present volumes will corroborate these impressions. His language about the Cameronians is too trenchant and severe. He may be right in blaming their extravagance, but he ought to have made more allowance for the oppression which made them mad, and to have shed a stronger light on their sincerity and want of selfishness. What a contrast between these people of the rocks, with all their sullen spleen and frenzied earnestness, and the paltry courtiers and statesmen of that day,—the trimming Whigs on the one hand, and the snaky traitors and sanctified assassins of Jacobitism on the other. It was not Alexander Shields—it was Claverhouse who wrote the *Hind Let Loose;* his cruelty turned Shields' pen into iron, and roused in the Cameronian party a demon that it took a half-century to lay. We think still less of the historian's attempt to ridicule George Fox. He has tried to effect this by the cheap and easy, but contemptible method of culling all his extravagant traits, and exhibiting them without his redeeming points—a method which Hume applied to Cromwell and the other noble Puritans, and which a recent writer (the Rev. James Smith, author of *The Divine Drama of History*) has ventured to apply to those "infatuated, imbecile, and weak-minded" persons (his very words)—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the other prophets of Israel! Macaulay sneers at Fox's suit of leather; he might as easily sneer at certain "sheepskins and goatskins," of which a certain Apostle speaks in his epistle to the Hebrews. He catalogues the contortions of the Sibyl, and laughs a dull laughter at them, but says nothing about the inspiration. He would have looked at Elijah's mantle with the eye of a tailor, and spoken of his fiery chariot in the spirit of a London cabman. How different from the style in which he once wrote of the Puritans in his paper on Milton! How different, to do Carlyle justice, from the spirit in which he speaks of Fox in *Sartor*. In

his chapter entitled " An Incident in Modern History," he treats Fox as a great earnest man, and not as a gibbering maniac, and rises as much above Macaulay in this, as Criffel above the Albany club-house. We deplore deeply this growing insensibility on our historian's part, to the highest spiritual enthusiasm. In a writer like Dickens, whom we always regard as a marvellous mannikin—a combination of the Cockney and the Parisian—who, like a rope-dancer, can perform feats which true men can neither do, nor refrain from despising when they see them done, and whose very geniality and genius are both as fantastic as they are wonderful, we are not astonished to find silly sneers at religion, caricatures of the Christian Sabbath, and a hundred other monkey-like mockeries of the earnest and the lofty. But in a man of Macaulay's thews and sinews, early education, and hereditary religious name, we know not whether to be more grieved or angry, at such passages as that on George Fox. It can raise him in the eyes of none but the profane. It must lower him in the estimation, even of those who now differ very widely from Fox's opinions; but who respect his intense sincerity, and are thankful for the good done to society by him, and the amiable sect who own him as their founder.

Those who desiderate in Macaulay's mind the true philosophic element, will not have their estimate materially altered by these volumes. We seldom find him grappling with general principles, and seldom do we come upon the seed-pearl of aphoristic thought—of that thought which suggests long trains of thinking in his readers' minds. Many of his fond admirers, who are also the (ignorant) admirers of Burke, have compared, and even preferred, him to that great statesman and orator. We are willing to stake the question upon this, which of the two writers expresses the most quotable and remarkable thoughts? We would not say images, for in this case we would be met by the foolish outcry about Burke's exuberant fancy; but thoughts, with or without figures, either lying bare on the simple page of the *Causes of the Present Discontents*, or sparkling on the rich ground of the *Reflections on the French Revolution?* We venture to say that we can quote from any fifty consecutive pages of Burke's works, more profound and pregnant reflections, as well as more brilliant images, than from *all* Macaulay's essays put together. Strong, direct, manly, highly-furnished, and intensely cultured intellect Macaulay always displays; but in subtlety, grasp, and above all thorough originality, he is not, for an instant, to be compared to Burke. That writer often

commences his paragraphs with simple and commonplace thoughts, but ere you are aware, and ere you reach the middle of the paragraph, you feel yourself in an abyss all gleaming with pearl-like truths. Macaulay is fond of beginning his paragraphs, too, with truisms, but, although, as he gets on, they seem to expand and to glow, they never deepen into comprehensive principles. In point of variety, nature, and energy of style, there is also no comparison. Burke, even when at ease, is great, and when he makes an effort he manages, in general, to conceal it,—you see the height but not the heaving of the wing.—Macaulay, when at ease, is so elaborately, and by effort, and with this effort, the common-place of the thoughts sometimes contrasts; and when he strains, the struggle is not always redeemed by the success. It is but fair, however, to grant, that of all his productions, the third and fourth volumes of the *History* are the easiest in style, and that in them his mannerisms are few, and never offensive.

With respect to historic proportion, Macaulay has had some difficulties to surmount, and has not always surmounted them well. Many English readers, for instance, will think that he has dwelt too long in the third volume on the state of the Highlands, and that the elaborate and eloquent dissertation on clans is out of proportion to the skirmish of Killiecrankie, which is recounted afterwards, while many Scotch and English, too, will grudge the space devoted to the affair of Sir John Fenwick. A few will blame him for narrating the massacre of Glencoe too minutely, while many will yawn over the controversies about the currency. Some would not have been sorry had two or three of the minor Jacobite plots been omitted, or, at least, told less prolixly, while, perhaps, all will wish that at least a fourth had been subtracted from the whole narrative. It is long since Lord Jeffrey cried out for a powerful calculus to compute the dimensions of *The Recluse*, of which the "Excursion" was only a small portion; and we would certainly require some very extraordinary power of numbers to compute how many pages, working at this rate, Macaulay is likely to produce ere he bring down the narrative to the age of George the Third.

With regard to the principal beauties of this work most of its readers will be of one opinion. Its account of battles and sieges has most impressed our imagination. Nothing can be better in their way than his pictures of the sieges of Derry and Namur —the battle of Landen and the battle of the Boyne. You see in these, the true spirit of the author of *The Lays of Ancient*

Rome. "He saith among the trumpets, 'Ha, ha,' and smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting." Here his Highland blood stands him in good stead, and you feel that the ancient spirit is not dead. Whether that spirit be of the loftiest or purest kind, is a different question. But battles can only be described as battles are fought, with self-forgetting enthusiasm and thorough *abandonment*, and these in the field of war Macaulay has in perfection. We do not admire, on the other hand, his descriptions of scenery. Action, character, men, —he describes with marvellous success, but not the still grandeurs or the solemn terrors of nature. Occasionally he pictures the beautiful in a happy style—witness in the third volume, his description of Kerry, which we consider a quiet delicious bit of landscape painting, but half a Highlander though he be, he shrinks before the scenery of the Highlands. Whether this be owing to his want of early contact with mountains, to his long residence in England, or to defect of natural taste for the magnificent and the terrible, we cannot tell, but the fact is unquestionable. There is not a scribbler on the London press but might describe Killiecrankie or Glencoe as well. In his account of Killiecrankie he becomes exceedingly artificial, and seems to think that he compliments its exquisite beauties by comparing them to the landscapes of celebrated painters, reminding you of the artist, who, when he once saw a peculiarly splendid sunset, cried "Titian all over!" Of the rich woodlands, the golden waters, the green-marble rocks, the steep frowning mountains, the white pathway piercing like a silver arrow the dark gulf of the pass—he gives no idea, and omits to mention the striking tradition that, when the soldiers of Mackay came to the opening of the gorge, they recoiled in fear, and said their leader had brought them to the mouth of hell. In describing Glencoe, he still more signally fails. He says:—

"That pass is the most dreary and melancholy of all the Scottish passes, the very valley of the shadow of death. Mists and storms brood over it through the greater part of the finest summer, and even on these rare days when the sun is bright, and when there is no cloud in the sky, the impression made by the landscape is sad and awful. The path lies along a stream which issues from the most sullen and gloomy of mountain pools. Huge precipices of naked stone frown on both sides. Even in July the streaks of snow may often be discerned in the rifts near the summits. All down the sides of the crags, heaps of ruin mark the headlong path of the torrents. Mile after mile the traveller looks in vain for the smoke of one hut, for one human form wrapped in a plaid, and listens in vain for the bark of a shepherd's dog, or the bleat of a lamb. Mile after mile the only sound that indicates life is the faint cry of a bird of prey from some storm-beaten pinnacle of rock. The progress of civilisa-

tion, which has turned so many wastes into fields yellow with harvest, or gay with apple-blossoms, has only made Glencoe more desolate."

This description, it will be noticed, seeks only to represent the solitude of the scene, and even that it greatly overstates. You would never guess from it that stage coaches loaded with passengers pass daily through this "valley of the shadow of death," and that, in summer, gigs and cars are perpetually plying. The few hours we spent in it, we met several mountaineers, and saw various dogs as well as sheep. One would imagine from Macaulay's picture, that the valley was as narrow as that in Bunyan, to which he compares it, whereas, in fact, as Talfourd truly says, "it is not a narrow defile, but a huge valley between mountains of rock, receding from each other till a field of air of several miles' breadth lies between their summits." The stream, the Cona, is one of the most beautiful of mountain rivers, and its voice although melancholy is inexpressibly pleasing, and sounds like an old Scottish melody amidst the stern and rugged hills. The pool is a lovely little lake, lying right under a stupendous mountain, a deep ravine in whose breast is called Ossian's Cave. Macaulay, while magnifying the sterility, has not a word to say about the grandeur of the scene, the torn and ruptured cliffs, the sea of serrated ridges which tumultuates around, the colossal confusion which reigns over the whole, and which makes you think of a "frozen hurricane" or of a tempest-tossed range of clouds, with all their jagged edges arrested and stiffened into eternal granite. In mist, or under the wing of a thunder-storm, the glen must be ineffably gloomy, but in us, seeing it on a bright autumn forenoon, it awakened emotions of rapturous enthusiasm, and the wilderness seemed to rejoice, and the solitary place to become glad, although, like the scenery, the joy and the gladness were stern and strange, reminding us of the emotion with which we had seen the waves of mist attacking the iron sides and summit of dark Lochnagar, while the last beams of day were vainly smiling upon the hopeless assault.

A tendency to paradox, or at least to pushing truth too far, has often been named as a characteristic of our author's mind. Nor has this peculiarity entirely deserted him in these volumes. For example, he ascribes the interest so generally felt in the scenery of the Highlands, entirely to the safety with which tourists can now traverse our glens and mountain solitudes. General Wade, and he alone, gets the credit for our modern taste for the picturesque. Now, surely, this is going absurdly far. Surely, in the course of this last century, many other agencies

besides improved road-making have been at work in awakening a love for the beauties of nature. Culture has been extending. Books have been circulating. Sir Walter Scott has been writing. The "Schoolmaster," as well as General Wade, "has been abroad." And while steam and railways have been conveying the bodies of "milliners and clerks" to the Trossachs and the Hebrides, knowledge has been preparing their minds to enjoy their beauties. Sight-seeing is indeed a fashion, but it is a fashion springing out of a highly cultured state of feeling, and we are persuaded that although wolves were still the tenants of our glens, and banditti were still haunting our woods and corries, many would dare all risks, for the sake of seeing the broad isle-bedropped Loch Lomond—visiting Iona, the Eye of the West—listening to that solemn hymn which the sea at Staffa sings to the heavens—wandering by the inky waters of Loch Aven—or treading the pathless brink of that dreadful Loch Coriskin, in Skye, to which Glencoe itself is a garden; just as many are at this hour defying the wolves and the banditti of the Apennines, the frightful crevasses and avalanches of the Alps, and the cougars, condors, and chasms of the Andes, for the sake of the wondrous beauties and grandeurs which they enclose. Of course, we grant that more have been attracted to the Scottish Highlands by good roads and cheap conveyances, than would otherwise have been, but other causes have also materially contributed to what we must call the delightful result. Macaulay slightly sneers at the "milliners and apprentices who visit our Highlands in autumn in such numbers," but, for our part, we love to fall in with such parties, to see the breeze of Caledonia blowing health on their faded cheeks, the lochs and glorious glens calling up the light of enthusiasm in their dim eyes, and surprising their hearts into a strange joy, in which they feel their being elevated and bettered, and the varied scenery through which they pass furnishing them with stores for memory and reflection through their long winter of tedium and of toil. Sometimes, indeed, their admiration of nature is affected, and we know few spectacles so ludicrously sad as the sight of certain Cockneys trying to measure their souls with our great mountains, to get up a sensation when beholding Foyers or the dark outline of Mull, and to apply some higher epithet than "handsome" to the prospects from Benvoirlich or Schiehallion, but, more frequently now, our visitors from the south are beginning to appreciate truly, and to love warmly, the scenery of Scotland, and their repeated visits are tending to give those a taste for it

who had none at first, and to cultivate it in those in whom it was originally small.

While granting that there is much justice and much eloquence in Macaulay's statements, as to the ignorance of the Highlands which prevailed previous to the end of the last century, we think that he not only exaggerates the facts, but is guilty of rather an egregious sophism. Because the *English* were ignorant of Highland manners, he concludes that the Lowland Scotch were equally so. This is quite incredible, when we remember the close proximity of the most populous parts of Scotland to the Highland line—the fact that the Highland host, as it was called, was let loose on the west long before the revolution, which inevitably introduced to the Lowlanders a knowledge of the barbarous manners and customs of the Northern clans—that Highland drovers were, at a very early period, in the habit of visiting every part of Scotland, as well as many parts of England —and that, in the age of Rob Roy, extensive commercial transactions had commenced between Glasgow and even English merchants and the Highland lairds. These, and many other facts, are incompatible with the theory that such a blank and black wall of ignorance separated the people of Edinburgh, who saw Rob Roy's country every day they mounted the Castle or the Calton Hill, and the inhabitants of Strathtay and Deeside. Less intercourse, of course—less sympathy, by far, there was than now between them. But the very contempt and hatred often expressed by the Lowlanders for the inhabitants of the mountains, proved that they were well acquainted with their peculiarities; although, in fact, the majority of the Lowlanders were not, till late in the eighteenth century, very much superior to their Highland brethren.

Macaulay, by the choice of his subject, has necessarily brought himself into comparison with Hume. To that historian he is by no means to be equalled in acuteness of philosophic genius or in exquisite simplicity of occasional style; but has, unquestionably, the advantage, not merely in the superior culture of a later age, and in access to more varied sources of information, but in eloquence, animation, broad and liberal views, and in his much warmer sympathies with literature, with freedom, and with religion. And yet his sympathies with this last are far from being sufficiently profound. We allude not merely to his unworthy treatment of the high religious heroism of individuals, but to his want of appreciation of the religions element, as a whole, in its workings in English history. Religious enthu-

siasm has been the most powerfully operating cause in the development of British character—in the establishment of British liberty—and in the production of British civilisation and intelligence. These three things—Protestantism, Puritanism, Methodism—all alike and kindred, although all different, what prodigious influence they have had in building up and in cementing the structure of the British Empire! The grandest passages in British story took place through the force, not of a cold, but of an enthusiastic Christianity. Need we name the Reformation, the Civil War, the Resistance of Scotland to Charles Second, the Revolution of 1688? Now, if it be true that history is best written in the spirit in which it is enacted, then we cannot salute Macaulay as our ideal historian of the deep-hearted religious eras in the past. His paper on Ranke's *Lives of the Popes*, as well as many parts of his history, prove that his early feelings towards Protestantism and Puritanism have somewhat cooled. If he ever tries to get up a glow about these subjects, it is but a faint and flickering feeling. He "even's" Cromwell ("even Cromwell governed Ireland better," he says)—he maligns the Cameronians—he derides George Fox—and, we fear, if permitted to carry down his narrative to the age of George Third, he will caricature the Methodists and the Missionaries in the same manner. Once a worshipper of earnest enthusiasm, he now seems to worship little else than courage, intellect, and genius. He sees Christianity, but it is as "in a glass, darkly"—he sees it as *of* history, but not as *in* history, as part of the matter, but not as the master of the progress of man. We have no wish that he should have set himself, like Rollin or D'Aubigne, elaborately and systematically to show us God in history. This, with both these authors, becomes a species of cant, and generates a spurious religious sentimentalism, just as a kindred spirit, Cheever, in his *Wanderings under the Shadow of Mont Blanc*, disgusts every sensible reader by his everlasting introduction of Scripture phrases, and sanctimonious common-places, and won't allow Nature to speak of God herself, without cramming bits of Job and Isaiah into her mouth. But without going to this extreme, Macaulay might have followed the example of one who equalled him in learning, and excelled him in regard for truth and in comprehensive views, if not in eloquence and genius —we mean Arnold, who without often using the language of Scripture, steeped his histories with the spirit of Christianity, who did not always, any more than the writer of *Esther*, employ the name of God, but who, like that writer, showed us the work-

ing of God's plan and providence in all things, and who, without ostentatiously proclaiming that he did, always in reality occupied a Christian point of view. Vain, however, to wish that Macaulay should ever become an Arnold, or a Christian historian. It is not in him to be this, nor can he become it without a miracle. Let us be thankful for him as he is, and for the work he has done. He has amassed materials out of which some master-mind, filled with the Christian idea, may, in a future age, pile up a colossal and conclusive history of England.

Such a writer, should he arise, will go to work in a spirit of sterner truthfulness, as well as under a higher spiritual ideal. Macaulay is far too much of a rhetorician to be a trustworthy narrator. In a hundred, and a hundred more places you feel that he is sacrificing rigid truth to artistic beauty, and has said within himself, "This I shall at least make telling, whether or not it be true," while a historian of a higher order would have said, "I shall ascertain and state the truth, whether it tell or not." The large flowers of his effects stand too often on a very narrow root of facts. He makes history far too entertaining. It is, in his hands, "reading made easy." In terror at dulness, he loses something of historic dignity. History, written like history enacted, *should* have its pauses, its rests, its tedious or tortuous passages—its difficult heights and its profound hollows. Macaulay *bowls* you along, with the utmost speed and ease. No great passage ever occurs over which you stop and feel your breast heaving thick—no solitary thought ever startles you by its surpassing loveliness, or its profound meaning. One consequence of this is, that much as you enjoy his writing at the first perusal, you seldom think of recurring to it again. When he has informed and amused you, he has done his work. There are no stings left behind—no far glimpses given, from lofty pinnacles of view, to which you are tempted to return. You open his pages with intense expectation and interest, but you close them without a sigh, or if you sigh, it is as you fancy what a striking resemblance there is between the impression produced by a (so-called) first-rate history and a second-rate novel. That the excessive popularity of this history is a disgrace to the age, we will not say; the age is, perhaps, quite right to pay best those who please it most. The world, let us talk as we like, will "love its own;" and Macaulay is intensely in harmony with the spirit of our bustling, fact-loving, mechanical age; but we would fain hope that there is an age approaching, when the demand for a history as high above Macaulay's as the heavens are above the earth, shall create the supply.

EDMUND BURKE[1]

All hail to Edmund Burke, the greatest and least appreciated man of the eighteenth century, even as Milton had been the greatest and least appreciated man of the century before! Each century, in fact, bears its peculiarly great man, and as certainly either neglects or abuses him. Nor do after ages always repair the deficiency. For instance, between the writing of the first and the second sentences of this paper, we happened to take up a London periodical, which has newly come in, and have found Burke first put at the feet of Fox, and, secondly, accused of being actuated in all his political conduct by two objects—those of places and pensions for himself and his family; so that our estimate of him, although late, may turn out, on the whole, a "word in season." It is, at all events, refreshing for us to look back from the days of a Derby and a Biographer Russell, to those of the great and eloquent Burke, and to turn from the ravings of the "Latter-Day Pamphlets," to the noble rage and magnificent philippics of a "Regicide Peace."

First of all, in this paper, we feel ourselves constrained to proclaim what, even yet, is not fully understood—Burke's unutterable superiority to all his parliamentary rivals. It was not simply that he was above them as one bough in a tree is above another, but above them as the sun is above the top of the tree. He was "not of their order." He had philosophic intellect, while they had only arithmetic. He had genius, while they had not even fancy. He had heart, while they had only passions. He had widest and most comprehensive views; their minds had little real power of generalisation. He had religion; most of them were infidels of that lowest order, who imagine that Christianity is a monster, bred between priestcraft and political expediency. He loved literature with his inmost soul; they (Fox on this point must be excepted) knew little about it, and cared less. In a word, they were men of their time; he belonged to all ages, and his mind was as catholic as it was clear and vast.

Contrast the works and speeches of the men! Has a sentence

[1] From *A Third Gallery of Literary Portraits*, 1854.

of Pitt's ever been quoted as a maxim? Does one passage of Fox appear in even our common books of elocutionary extracts? Are Sheridan's flights remembered except for their ambitious and adventurous badness? Unless one or two showy climaxes of Grattan and Curran, what else of them is extant? How different with Burke. His works are to this hour burning with genius, and swarming with wisdom. You cannot open a page without finding either a profound truth expressed in the shortest and sharpest form, looking up at you like an eye; or a brilliant image flashing across with the speed and splendour of a meteor; or a description, now grotesque, and now gorgeous; or a literary allusion, cooling and sweetening the fervour of the political discussion; or a quotation from the poets, so pointed and pat, that it assumes the rank of an original beauty. Burke's writing is almost unrivalled for its combination and dexterous interchange of excellences. It is by turns statistics, metaphysics, painting, poetry, eloquence, wit, and wisdom. It is so cool and so warm, so mechanical and so impulsive, so measured and so impetuous, so clear and so profound, so simple and so rich. Its sentences are now the shortest, and now the longest; now bare as Butler, and now figured as Jeremy Taylor; now conversational, and now ornate, intense, and elaborate in the highest degree. He closes many of his paragraphs in a rushing thunder and fiery flood of eloquence, and opens the next as calmly as if he had ceased to be the same being. Indeed, he is the least monotonous and manneristic of modern writers, and in this, as in so many other respects, excels such authors as Macaulay and Chalmers, who are sometimes absurdly compared to him. He has, in fact, as we hinted above, three, if not four or five, distinct styles, and possesses equal mastery over all. He exhibits specimens of the law-paper style, in his articles of charge against Warren Hastings; of the calm, sober, uncoloured argument, in his *Thoughts on the Present Discontents;* of the ingenious, high-finished, but temperate philosophical essay, in his "Sublime and Beautiful;" of the flushed and fiery diatribe, here storming into fierce scorn and invective, and there soaring into poetical eloquence, in his "Letter to a Noble Lord," and in his "Regicide Peace;" and of a style combining all these qualities, and which he uses in his Speech on the Nabob of Arcot's Debts, and in his *Reflections on the French Revolution.* Thus you may read a hundred pages of him at once, without finding any power but pure intellect at work, and at other times every sentence is starred with an image, even as

every moment of some men's sleep is spiritualised by a dream; and, in many of them, figures cluster and crowd upon each other. It is remarkable that his imagination becomes apparently more powerful as he draws near the end of his journey. The reason of this probably was: he became more thoroughly in earnest towards the close. Till the trial of Warren Hastings, or even on to the outbreak of the French Revolution, he was a volcano speaking and snorting out fire at intervals—an Etna at ease; but from these dates he began to pour out incessant torrents of molten lava upon the wondering nations. Figures are a luxury to cool thinkers; they are a necessity to prophets. The Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel have no choice. Their thought *must* come forth with the fiery edge of metaphor around it.

Let us look, in the course of the remarks that follow, to the following points—to Burke's powers, to his possible achievements, to his actual works, to his oratory, to his conversation, to his private character, to his critics, and to the question, what has been the result of his influence as a writer and a thinker?

1. We would seek to analyse shortly his powers. These were distinguished at once by their variety, comprehensiveness, depth, harmony, and brilliance. He was endowed in the very "prodigality of heaven" with genius of a creative order, with boundless fertility of fancy, with piercing acuteness and comprehension of intellect, with a tendency leading him irresistibly down into the depths of every subject, and with an eloquence at once massive, profuse, fiery, and flexible. To these powers he united, what are not often found in their company, slow plodding perseverance, indomitable industry, and a cautious, balancing disposition. We may apply to him the words of Scripture, "He could *mount* up with wings as an eagle, he could *run* and not be weary, he could *walk* and not be faint." Air, earth, and the things under the earth, were equally familiar to him; and you are amazed to see how easily he can fold up the mighty wings which had swept the ether, and "knit" the mountain to the sky, and turn to mole-like minings in the depths of the miry clay, which he found it necessary also to explore. These vast and various powers he had fed with the most extensive, most minute, most accurate, most artistically managed reading, with elaborate study, with the closest yet kindliest observation of human nature, and with free and copious intercourse with all classes of men. And to inspirit and inflame their action, there were a profound sense of public duty, ardent

benevolence, the passions of a hot but generous heart, and a strong-felt, although uncanting and unostentatious piety.

2. His possible achievements. To what was a man like this, who could at once soar and delve, overtop the mountain, skim the surface, and explore the mine, not competent? He was, shall we say? a mental camelopard—patient as the camel, and as the leopard swift and richly spotted. We have only in his present works the fragments of his genius. Had he not in some measure,

> Born for the universe, narrow'd his mind,
> And to party given up what was meant for mankind,

what works on general subjects had he written! It had been, perhaps, a system of philosophy, merging and kindling into poetry, resembling Brown's "Lectures," but informed by a more masculine genius; or it had been, perhaps, a treatise on the Science of Politics, viewed on a large and liberal scale; or it had been, perhaps, a history of his country, abounding in a truer philosophy and a more vivid narrative than Hume, and in pictures more brilliant than Macaulay's; or it had been, perhaps, a work on the profounder principles of literature or of art; or it had been, perhaps—for this, too, was in his power—some strain of solemn poetry, rising higher than Akenside or Thomson; or else some noble argument or apology for the faith that was in him in the blessed religion of Jesus. Any or all of these tasks we believe to have been thoroughly within the compass of Burke's universal mind, had his lot been otherwise cast, and had his genius not been so fettered by circumstance and subject, that he seems at times a splendid generaliser in chains.

3. These decided views, as to the grand possibilities of this powerful spirit, must not be permitted to blind us to what he has actually done. This, alike in quantity and in quality, challenges our wonder. Two monster octavos of his works are lying before us; and we believe that, besides, there is extant matter from his pen equal to another volume. What strikes you most about the quality of his writing, is the amazing restlessness and richness of his thought. His book is an ant-hill of stirring, swarming, blackening ideas and images. His style often reposes—his mind never. Hall very unjustly accuses him of amplification. There are, indeed, a few passages of superb amplification sprinkled through his writings; but this is rarely his manner, and you never, as in some writers, see a thought small as the body of a fly suspended between the wings of an eagle. He has too much to say, to care in general about

expanding or beating it thin. Were he dallying long with, or seeking to distend, an image, a hundred more would become impatient for their turn. Foster more truly remarks, "Burke's sentences are pointed at the end—instinct with pungent sense to the last syllable; they are like a charioteer's whip, which not only has a long and effective lash, but cracks and inflicts a still smarter sensation at the end. They are like some serpents, whose life is said to be fiercest in the tail." It is a mind full to overflowing, pouring out, now calmly and now in tumult and heat, now deliberately and now in swift torrents, its thoughts, feelings, acquirements, and speculations. This rich restlessness might, by and by, become oppressive, were it not for the masterly ease of manner, and the great variety, as well as quantity, of thinking. He never harps too long on one string. He is perpetually making swift and subtle transitions from the grave to the gay, from the severe to the lively, from facts to figures, from statistics to philosophical speculations, from red-hot invective to caustic irony, from the splendid filth of his abuse to the flaming cataracts of his eloquence and poetry. His manner of writing has been accused of "caprice," but unjustly. Burke was a great speculator on style, and was regulated in most of its movements by the principles of art, as well as impelled by the force of genius. He held, for instance, that every great sentence or paragraph should contain a thought, a sentiment, and an image; and we find this rule attended to in all his more elaborate passages. He was long thought a "flowery and showy" writer, and contrasted, by Parr and others, unfavourably with such writers as MacIntosh and even Paine. Few now will have the hardihood to reiterate such egregious nonsense. His flowers were, indeed, numerous; but they sprang out naturally, and were the unavoidable bloom of deep and noble thought. We call the foam of a little river "froth," that of Niagara, or the ocean, "spray." Burke's imagination was the giant spray of a giant stream, and his fancy resembled the rainbows which often appear suspended in it. Besides all this, he had unlimited command of words and allusions, culled from every science, and art, and page of history; and this has rendered, and will ever render, his writings legible by those who care very little for his political opinions, and have slender interest in the causes he won or lost. His faults were not numerous, although very palpable. He cannot always reason with calm consecutiveness. He sometimes permits, not so much his imagination, as his morbidly active intellect and his

fierce passions, to run him into extravagance. He lays often too much stress upon small causes, although this sprung from what was one of his principal powers—that of generalising from the particular, and, Cuvier-like, seeing entire mammoths in small and single bones. He is occasionally too truculent in his invective, and too personal in his satire. His oracular tone is sometimes dogmatic and offensive; and he frequently commits errors of taste, especially when his descriptions verge upon the humorous; for, Irishman though he was, his wit and humour were not quite equal to his other powers.

We select three from among his productions for short special criticism: his "Speech on the Nabob of Arcot's Debts," his *Reflections on the French Revolution*, and his "Letters on a Regicide Peace." The first is probably the most complete oration in literature. Henry Rogers, indeed, prefers the speeches of Demosthenes, as higher specimens of pure oratory; and so they are, if you take oratory, in a limited sense, as the art of persuasion and immediate effect. But Burke's speech, if not in this sense equal to the "Pro Corona," even as Milton's "Areopagitica" is not in this sense equal to Sheridan on the "Begum Charge," is, in all other elements which go to constitute the excellence of a composition, incomparably superior. You see a great mind meeting with a great subject, and intimate with it, in all its length, and breadth, and depth, and thickness; here diving down into its valleys, and there standing serene upon its heights; here ranging at ease through its calms, and there, with tyrant nerve, ruling its storms of passion and harrowing interest. The picture of Hyder Ali, and of the "cloud" which burst upon the plains of the Carnatic, has been subjected to Brougham's clumsy and captious criticism, but has come out unscathed; and we venture to say, that in massive, unforced magnificence it remains unsurpassed. There is no trick, no heaving effort, no "double, double toil and trouble," as in many of Lord Brougham's own elaborate passages. The flight is as calm and free, as it is majestic and powerful;

> Sailing with supreme dominion,
> Through the azure deep of air.

His *Reflections* was certainly the most powerful pamphlet ever written, if pamphlet it can be called, which is only a pamphlet in form, but a book in reality. It should have been called a "Reply to the French Revolution." Etna had spoken, and this was Vesuvius answering in feebler, but still strong and far-heard thunder. Its power was proved by its effect. It did

not, indeed, create the terror of Europe against that dreadful Shape of Democracy which had arisen over its path, and by its shadow had turned all the waters into blood; but it condensed, pointed, and propelled the common fear and horror into active antagonism with its opponent. It sharpened the sword of the prevailing desire for the fight. It was the first wild, wailing trumpet of a battlefield of twenty-four years' duration. One is reminded of the contest between Fingal and the Spirit of Loda. There seemed, at first, a great disparity between the solitary warrior and the dreadful form riding upon the midnight tempest, and surrounded with his panoply of clouds. But the warrior was *ipse agmen*—his steel was sharp and true; he struck at the demon, and the demon shrieked, rolled himself together, and retired a space, to return, however, again, with his painful wound healed, and the fury of his blasts aggravated, when there was no Burke to oppose him. The merits of this production are, we think, greatly enhanced by the simplicity of the vehicle in which its thoughts ride. The book is a letter; but such a letter! In this simplest shape of literature, we find philosophy the most subtle; invective the most sublime; speculation the most far-stretching; Titanic ridicule, like the cachinnation of a Cyclops; piercing pathos; powerful historic painting; and eloquence the most dazzling that ever combined depth with splendour. That it is the ultimate estimate of the French Revolution is contended for by no one. THAT shall only be seen after the history of earth is ended, and after it is all inscribed (to allude to the beautiful Arabian fable) in laconics of light over "Allah's head;" but, meantime, while admitting that Burke's view of it is in some points one-sided, and in others coloured by prejudice, we contend that he has, with general fidelity, painted the thing as it then was—the bloody bantling as he saw it in the cradle—although he did not foresee that circumstances and events were greatly to modify and soften its features as it advanced. Let him have praise, at least, for this, that he discerned and exposed the true character of modern infidelity, which, amid all the disguises it has since assumed, is still, and shall remain till its destruction, the very monster of vanity, vice, malignity, and sciolism, which he has, by a few touches of lightning, shown it to be. How thoroughly he comprehended the devil-inspired monkey, Voltaire; and the winged frog, Rousseau; and that iron machine of artistic murder, Carnot; and La Fayette, the republican coxcomb; and that rude incarnation of the genius of the guillotine, Robespierre!

Through those strange Satanic shapes he moves in the majesty of his virtue and his manly genius; like a lofty human being through the corner of a museum appropriated to monsters—not doing violence to his own senses, by seeking to include them in the catalogue of men, nor in an attitude of affected pity and transcendental charity;—but feeling and saying, "How ugly and detestable these miscreations are, and, faugh! what a stench they emit."

In a similar spirit, and with even greater power, does he seek to exorcise the evil spirit of his times, in his "Letters on a Regicide Peace." These glorious fragments employed his last hours, and the shadow of the grave lies solemnly upon them. When he wrote them, although far from being a very old man (he was just sixty-four), yet the curtains of his life's hope had suddenly been dropped around him. It was not that he and his old friends, the Whigs, had quarrelled; it was not that he had stood by the death-bed of Johnson, and had undergone the far severer pang which attended his divorce from the friendship of Fox; it was not that his circumstances were straitened; it was not that his motives were misrepresented; it was not that "misery had made him acquainted with strange bedfellows," and driven him to herd with beings so inferior and radically different as Pitt and Dundas;—but it was that death had snatched away him in whom he had "garnered up his heart"—his son. Be it that that son was not all his father had thought him to be, to others—he *was* it all to him. If not rich himself, was it nothing that his father had lavished on him his boundless wealth of esteem and affection? As it is, he shines before us in the light of his father's eloquence for evermore. Strange and enviable this power of genius! It can not only "give us back the dead even in the loveliest looks they wore," but it can give them a loveliness they never possessed; it can dignify the obscure, it can illuminate the dark, it can embalm the decayed; and, in its transforming splendour, the common worm becomes a glow-worm, the common cloud a cloud of fire and glory, every arch a rainbow, every spark a star, and every star a sun. It can preserve obscure sorrows, and the obscurer causes of these sorrows, and hang a splendour in the tears of childhood, and eternise the pathos of those little pangs which rend little hearts. How De Quincey, for example, has beautified the sorrows, and peculiarities, and small adventures of his boyhood—and in what a transfiguring beam of imagination does he show the dead face of his dear sister, Elizabeth! And this young Burke sleeps, at

once guarded and glorified, beneath the bright angel-wings of his father's mighty genius.

It is most affecting to come upon those plaintive expressions of desolation which abound in Burke's later works, as where he calls himself an "unhappy man," and wishes to be permitted to "enjoy in his retreat the melancholy privileges of obscurity and sorrow;" and where he compares himself to an "old oak stripped of his honours, and torn up by the roots." But not for nothing were these griefs permitted to environ him. Through the descending cloud, a mighty inspiration stooped down upon his soul. Grief roused, and bared, and tossed up his spirit to its very depths. He compares himself to Job, lying on his dunghill, and insulted by the miserable comfort of his friends. And as Job's silent anguish broke out at last into sublime curses, and his dunghill heaved up into a burning prophetic peak, so it was with the "old man eloquent" before us. From his solitary Beaconsfield, with its large trees moaning around, as if in sympathy with his incommunicable sorrow, he uttered prophetic warnings which startled Europe; he threw forth pearls of deepest thought and purest eloquence; he blew war-blasts of no uncertain sound, to which armies were to move, and navies to expand their vast white wings; he poured out plaints of sorrow, which melted the hearts of millions; his "lightnings also he shot out," forked bolts of blasting invective, against the enemies or pretended friends, the impostors high or low, who dared to intrude on his sacred solitude; and it fared alike with a Duke of Bedford and a Thomas Paine, as with the rebel angels in Milton:—

> On each wing
> Uriel and Raphael, his vaunting foe,
> Though huge, and in a rock of diamond arm'd,
> Vanquish'd Adramelech and Asmadai,
> Two potent thrones, that to be less than gods
> Disdain'd, but meaner thoughts learn'd in their flight,
> Mangled with ghastly wounds through plate and mail.
> Nor stood unmindful Abdiel to annoy
> The atheist crew, but, with redoubled blow,
> Ariel and Arioch, and the violence
> Of Ramiel scorch'd and blasted, overthrew.

But he had not only the inspiration of profound misery, but that, also, of a power projected forward from eternity. He knew that he was soon to die, and the motto of all his later productions might have been, "Moriturus vos saluto." This gave a deeper tone to his tragic warnings, a higher dignity to his prophetic attitude, and a weightier emphasis to his

terrible denunciations. He reminded men of that wild-eyed prophet, who ran around the wall of doomed Jerusalem till he sank down in death, and cried out, "Woe, woe, woe, to this city." In the utterance of such wild, but musical and meaning cries, did Burke breathe out his spirit.

The "Regicide Peace" contains no passages so well known as some in the *Reflections*, but has, on the whole, a profounder vein of thinking, a bolder imagery, a richer and more peculiar language, as well as certain long and high-wrought paragraphs, which have seldom been surpassed. Such is his picture of Carnot, "snorting away the fumes of the undigested blood of his sovereign;" his comparison of the revolutionary France to Algiers; his description of a supposed entrance of the Regicide ambassadors into London; and the magnificent counsels he gives Pitt as to what he thought *should* have been his manner of conducting the war. As we think this one of the noblest swells of poetic prose in the language, and have never seen it quoted, or even alluded to by former critics, we shall give it entire:

"After such an elaborate display had been made of the injustice and insolence of an enemy, who seems to have been irritated by every one of the means which had commonly been used with effect to soothe the rage of intemperate power, the natural result would be, that the scabbard in which we in vain attempted to plunge our sword, should have been thrown away with scorn. It would have been natural, that, rising in the fulness of their might, insulted majesty, despised dignity, violated justice, rejected supplication, patience goaded into fury, would have poured out all the length of the reins upon all the wrath they had so long restrained. It might have been expected that, emulous of the glory of the youthful hero (Archduke Charles of Austria) in alliance with him, touched by the example of what one man, well formed and well placed, may do in the most desperate state of affairs, convinced there is a courage of the cabinet full as powerful, and far less vulgar, than that of the field, our minister would have changed the whole line of that useless prosperous prudence, which had hitherto produced all the effects of the blindest temerity. If he found his situation full of danger (and I do not deny that it is perilous in the extreme), he must feel that it is also full of glory, and that he is placed on a stage, than which no muse of fire, that had ascended the highest heaven of invention, could imagine anything more awful and august. It was hoped that, in this swelling scene in which he

moved, with some of the first potentates of Europe for his fellow-actors, and with so many of the rest for the anxious spectators of a part which, as he plays it, determines for ever their destiny and his own, like Ulysses in the unravelling point of the epic story, he would have thrown off his patience and his rags together, and, stripped of unworthy disguises, he would have stood forth in the form and in the attitude of a hero. On that day it was thought he would have assumed the port of Mars; that he would have bid to be brought forth from their hideous kennel (where his scrupulous tenderness had too long immured them) those impatient dogs of war, *whose fierce regards affright even the minister of vengeance that feeds them;* that he would let them loose, in famine, fever, plagues, and death, upon a guilty race, to whose frame, and to all whose habit, order, peace, religion, and virtue are alien and abhorrent. It was expected that he would at last have thought of active and effectual war; that he would no longer amuse the British lion in the chase of rats and mice; that he would no longer employ the whole naval power of Great Britain, once the terror of the world, to prey upon the miserable remains of a peddling commerce, which the enemy did not regard, and from which none could profit. It was expected that he would have re-asserted the justice of his cause; that he would have re-animated whatever remained to him of his allies, and endeavoured to recover those whom their fears had led astray; that he would have rekindled the martial ardour of his citizens; that he would have held out to them the example of their ancestry, the asserter of Europe, and the scourge of French ambition; that he would have reminded them of a posterity which, if this nefarious robbery, under the fraudulent name and false colour of a government, should in full power be seated in the heart of Europe, must for ever be consigned to vice, impiety, barbarism, and the most ignominious slavery of body and mind. In so holy a cause, it was presumed that he would (as in the beginning of the war he did) have opened all the temples, and, with prayer, with fasting, and with supplication (better directed than to the grim Moloch of regicide in France), have called upon us to raise that united cry which has so often stormed heaven, and, *with a pious violence, forced down blessings upon a repentant people.* It was hoped that, when he had invoked upon his endeavours the favourable regards of the protector of the human race, it would be seen that his menaces to the enemy, and his prayers to the Almighty, were not followed, but accompanied, with corresponding action. It

was hoped that his shrilling trumpet should be heard, not to announce a show, but to sound a charge."

We come now to him as an orator. And here we must correct a prevailing misconception. Many seem to imagine that he had no power of oratorical impression; that he was a mere "dinner-bell;" and that all his speeches, however splendid, fell still-born from his lips. So far was this from being the case, that his very first orations in parliament—those, namely, on the Stamp Act—delivered when he had yet a reputation to make, according to Johnson, "filled the town with wonder;" an effect which, we fancy, their mere merit, if unaccompanied by some energy and interest of delivery, could hardly have produced. So long as he was in office under Lord Rockingham, and under the Coalition Ministry, he was listened to with deference and admiration. His speech against Hastings was waited for with greater eagerness, and heard with greater admiration, than any of that brilliant series, except, perhaps, Sheridan's on the Begum Charge; and in its closing passage, impeaching Hastings "in the name of Human Nature itself," it rose, even as to effect, to a height incomparably above any of the rest. His delivery, indeed, and voice were not first rate, but only fribbles or fools regard such things much, or at least long, in a true orator; and when Burke became fully roused, his minor defects were always either surmounted by himself, or forgotten by others. The real secret of his parliamentary unpopularity, in his later years, lay, first, in the envy with which his matchless powers were regarded; secondly, in his fierce and ungovernable temper, and the unguarded violence of his language; thirdly, in the uncertainty of his position and circumstances; and, lastly, in the fact, as Johnson has it, that "while no one could deny that he spoke well, yet all granted that he spoke too often and too long." His soul, besides, generally soared above his audience, and sometimes forgot to return. In honest Goldsmith's version of it,

> Too deep for his hearers, he went on refining,
> And thought of convincing, while they thought of dining.

But he could never be put down to the last, and might, had he chosen, have contested the cheap palm of instant popularity even with the most voluble of his rivals. But the "play was not worth the candle." He mingled, indeed, with their temporary conflicts; but it was like a god descending from Ida to the plains of Troy, and sharing in the vulgar shock of arms, with a high celestial purpose in view. He was, in fact, over

the heads of the besotted parliaments of his day, addressing the ears of all future time, and has not been inaudible in *that* gallery.

Goldsmith is right in saying that so far he "narrowed his mind." But, had he narrowed it a little further, he could have produced so much the more of immediate impression, and so much the more have circumscribed his future influence and power. He *was* by nature what Clootz pretended to be, and what all genuine speakers should aim at being, "an orator of the human race," and he never altogether lost sight of this his high calling. Hence, while a small class adored him, and a large class respected, the majority found his speaking apart from their purpose, and if they listened to it, it was from a certain vague impression that it was something great and splendid, only not very intelligible, and not at all practical. In fact, the brilliance of his imagination, and the restless play of his ingenuity, served often to conceal the solid depth and practical bearings of his wisdom. Men seldom give a famous man credit for all the faculties he possesses. If they dare not deny his genius, they deny his sense; or, if they are obliged to admit his sense, they question his genius. If he is strong, he cannot be beautiful, and if beautiful, he must be weak. That Burke suffered much from this false and narrow style of criticism, is unquestionable; but that he was ever the gigantic bore on the floor of the House of Commons which some pretend, we venture to doubt. The fact was probably this—on small matters he was thought prosy, and coughed down, but, whenever there was a large load to be lifted, a great question to be discussed—a Hastings to be crushed, or a French revolution to be analysed—the eyes of the house instinctively turned to the seat where the profound and brilliant man was seated, and their hearts irresistibly acknowledged, at times, what their tongues and prejudices often denied.

And yet it is amusing to find, from a statement of Burke's own, that the Whigs whom he had deserted solaced themselves for the unparalleled success of the *Reflections on the French Revolution*, by underrating it in a literary point of view. Is this the spirit of real or of mock humility in which he speaks, in his "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs?" "The gentlemen who in the name of the party have passed sentence on Mr. Burke's book in the light of literary criticism, are judges above all challenge. He did not indeed flatter himself that, as a writer, he could claim the approbations of men whose talents,

in his judgment and in the public judgment, approach to prodigies, if ever such persons should be disposed to estimate the merit of a composition upon the standard of their own ability." Surely this must be ironical, else it would seem an act of voluntary humility as absurd as though De Quincey were deferring in matters of philosophy or style to the "superior judgment" of some of our American or St. Andrews made doctors; or as though Mrs. Stowe were to dedicate her next novel to the author of the "Coming Struggle." Pretty critics they were! Think of the glorious eloquence, wisdom, passion, and poetry, the "burning coals of juniper, sharp arrows of the strong," to be found in every page of the *Reflections*, sneered at by two men, at least, not one of whose works is now read—by the writer of a farrago like the "Spital Sermon," or by the author of such illegible dulness as the *History of James II.*, or even by Sheridan, with his clever, heartless plays, and the brilliant falsetto of his speeches; or even by MacIntosh, with the rhetorical logic and forced flowers of his *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*. Surely Burke did, in his heart, appeal from their tribunal to that of a future age. To do MacIntosh justice, he learned afterwards to form a far loftier estimate of the author of the *Reflections*. He was, soon after the publication of his *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*, invited to spend some days at Beaconsfield. There he found the old giant, now toying on the carpet with little children, now cracking bad jokes and the vilest of puns, and now pouring out magnificent thoughts and images. In the course of a week's animated discussion on the French Revolution, and many cognate subjects, MacIntosh was completely converted to Burke's views, and came back impressed with an opinion of his genius and character, far higher than his writings had given him. Indeed, his speech in defence of Peltier—by much the most eloquent of his published speeches—bears on it the fiery traces of the influence which Burke had latterly exerted on his mind. The early sermons, too, and the "Apology for the Liberty of the Press," by Hall, are less coloured, than created by the power which Burke's writings had exerted on his dawning genius. But more of this afterwards.

What a pity that Boswell had not been born a twin, and that the brother had not attached himself as fondly and faithfully to Burke, as Jemmy to Johnson! Boswell's Life of Burke would *now* have been even more popular than Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. For, if Johnson's sayings were more pointed and witty, Burke's were profounder and sublimer far. Johnson

had lived as much with books and with certain classes of men, but Burke had conversed more with the silent company of thoughts; and all grand generalisations were to him palpable, familiar, and life-like as a gallery of pictures. Johnson was a lazy, slumbering giant, seldom moving himself except to strangle the flies which buzzed about his nostrils; Burke wrought like a Cyclops in his cave. Johnson, not Burke, was the master of amplification, from no poverty, but from indolence: he often rolled out sounding surges of commonplace, with no bark and little beauty, upon the swell of the wave; Burke's mind, as we have seen before, was morbidly active; it was impatient of circular movement round an idea, or of noise and agitation without progress: his motto ever was "Onwards," and his eloquence always bore the stamp of thought. Johnson looked at all things through an atmosphere of gloom; Burke was of a more sanguine temperament; and if cobwebs did at any time gather, the breath of his anger or of his industry speedily blew them away. Johnson had mingled principally with scholars, or the middle class of the community; Burke was brought early into contact with statesmen, the nobility and gentry, and this told both upon his private manners and upon his knowledge of human nature. Johnson's mind was of the sharp, strong, sturdy order; Burke's, of the subtle, deep, revolving sort; as Goldsmith said, he "wound into every subject like a serpent." Both were honest, fearless, and pious men; but, while Burke's honesty sometimes put on a court dress, and his fearlessness sometimes "licked the dust," and his piety could stand at ease, Johnson in all these points was ever roughly and nakedly the same. Johnson, in wit, the point of individual sentences, and in solemn pictures of human life, its sorrows and frailties, was above Burke; but was as far excelled by him in power of generalisation, vastness of range and reading, exuberance of fancy, daring rhetoric, and in skilful management and varied cadence of style. Johnson had a philosophical vein, but it had never received much culture; Burke's had been carefully fed, and failed only at times through the subjects to which it was directed. Johnson's talk, although more brilliant, memorable, and imposing, was also more set, starched, and produced with more effort than Burke's, who seemed to talk admirably because he could not help it, or, as his great rival said, "because his mind was full." Johnson was, notwithstanding his large proportions, of the earth earthy, after all; his wings, like those of the ostrich, were not commensurate with his size; Burke, to

vast bulk and stature, added pinions which bore him from peak to peak, and from one gorgeous tract of "cloudland" to another.

Boswell and Prior have preserved only a few specimens of Burke's conversation, which are, however, so rich as to excite deep regret that more has not been retained; and a conviction that his traditional reputation has not been exaggerated, and that his talk was the truest revelation of his powers. Every one knows the saying of Dr. Johnson, that you could not go with Burke under a shed to shun a shower, without saying, "this is an extraordinary man." Nor was this merely because he could talk cleverly and at random, on all subjects, and hit on brilliant things; but that he seemed to have weighed and digested his thoughts, and prepared and adjusted his language on all subjects, at the same time that impulse and excitement were ever ready to sprinkle splendid impromptus upon the stream of his speech. He combined the precision and perfect preparation of the lecturer, with the ease and fluency of the conversationist. He did not, like some, go on throwing out shining paradoxes; or, with others, hot gorgeous metaphors, hatched between excitement and vanity; or, with others, give prepared and polished orations, disguised in the likeness of extempore harangues; or, with others, perpetually strive to startle, to perplex, to mystify, and to shine. Burke's talk was that of a thoroughly furnished, gifted, and profoundly informed man, *thinking aloud*. His conversation was just the course of a great, rich river, winding at its sweet or its wild will—always full, often overflowing; sometimes calm, and sometimes fretted and fierce; sometimes level and deep, and sometimes starred with spray, or leaping into cataracts; sometimes rolling through rich alluvial plains, and sometimes through defiles of romantic interest. Who shall venture to give us an "Imaginary Conversation" between him and Johnson, on the subject referred to by Boswell, about the comparative merits of Homer and Virgil, or on some similar topic, in a style that shall adequately represent the point, roughness, readiness, and sense of the one, and the subtlety, varied knowledge, glares of sudden metaphoric illumination crossing the veins of profound reflection, which distinguished the other—the "no, sirs," and the "therefores" of the one, with the "buts," the "unlesses," and the terrible "excuse me, sirs," of the other? We wonder that Savage Landor has never attempted it, and brought in poor Burns—the only man then living in Britain quite worthy

to be a third party in the dialogue—now to shed his meteor light upon the matter of the argument; and now, by his wit or song, to soothe and harmonise the minds of the combatants.

Burke's talk is now, however, as a whole, irrecoverably lost. What an irrepressible sigh escapes us, as we reflect that this is true of so many noble spirits! Their works may remain with us, but that fine aroma which breathed in their conversation, that inspired beam which shone in their very eyes, are for ever gone. Some of the first of men, indeed, have had nothing to lose in this respect. Their conversation was inferior to their general powers. Their works were evening shadows, more gigantic than themselves. We have, at least, their essence preserved in their writings. This probably is true even of Shakspere and Milton. But Johnson, Burke, Burns, and Coleridge were so constituted, that conversation was the only magnet that could draw out the full riches of their genius; and all of them would have required each his own Siamese twin to have accompanied him through life, and, with the pen and the patience of Bozzy, to have preserved the continual outpourings of their fertile brains and fluent tongues. We are not, however, arguing their superiority to the two just mentioned, or to others of a similar stamp, whose writings were above their talk—far the reverse—but are simply asserting, that we may regret more the comparative meagreness of biography in the case of the one class than of the other.

Burke, in private, was unquestionably one of the most blameless of the eminent men of his day. He was, in all his married life at least, entirely free from the licentiousness of Fox, the dissipation of Sheridan, and the hard-drinking habits of Pitt. But he was also the most amiable and actively-benevolent of them. Wise as a serpent, he was harmless as a dove; and, when the deep sources of his virtuous indignation were not touched, gentle as a lamb. Who has forgot his fatherly interest in poor Crabbe—that flower blushing and drooping unseen, till Burke lifted it up in his hand, and gave his protegé bread and immortality? or his kindness to rough, thankless Barry, whom he taught and counselled as wisely as if he had been a prophet of art, not politics, and as if he had studied nothing else but painting (proving thus, besides his tender heart, that a habit and power of deep and genuine thinking can easily be transferred from one branch to all, a truth substantiated, besides, by the well-known aid he gave Sir Joshua Reynolds in his lectures); or last, not least, his Good Samaritan

treatment of the wretched street-stroller he met, took home, introduced, after hearing her story, to Mrs. Burke, who watched over, reformed, and employed her in her service? "These are deeds which must not pass away." Like green laurels on the bald head of a Cæsar, they add a beauty and softness to the grandeur of Burke's mind, and leave you at a loss (fine balance! rare alternative! compliment, like a biforked sunbeam, cutting two ways!) whether more to love or to admire him. Fit it was that *he* should have passed that noble panegyric on Howard, the "Circumnavigator of Charity," which now stands, and shall long stand, like a mountain before its black and envious shadow, over against Carlyle's late unhappy attack on the unrivalled philanthropist.

We promised a word on Burke's critics. They have been numerous and various. From Johnson, Fox, Laurence, MacIntosh, Wordsworth, Brougham, Hazlitt, Macaulay, De Quincey, Croly, H. Rogers, etc., down to Prior, etc. Johnson gave again and again his sturdy verdict in his favour, which was more valuable then than it is now. "If I were," he said, when once ill and unable to talk, "to meet that fellow Burke to-night, it would kill me." Fox admitted that he had learned more from Burke's conversation than from all his reading and experience put together. Laurence, one of his executors, has left recorded his glowing sense of his friend's genius and virtues. Of MacIntosh's admiration we have spoken above; although, in an article which appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*, somewhere in 1830, he seems to modify his approbation; induced to this, partly, perhaps, by the influences of Holland House, and partly by those chills of age which, falling on the higher genius and nature of Burke, served only to revive and stimulate him, but which damped whatever glow MacIntosh once had. Wordsworth's lofty estimate is given in Lord John Russell's recent biography of Moore, and serves not only to prove what his opinion was, but to establish a strong distinction between the mere *dilettante littérateur* like Canning, and the mere statesman like Pitt, and a man who, like Burke, combined the deepest knowledge of politics, and the most unaffected love for literature and literary men. Brougham's estimate, in his *Statesmen*, etc., is not exactly unfair, but fails, first, through his lordship's profound unlikeness, in heart, habits, kind of culture, taste, and genius, to the subject of his critique—(Burke, to name two or three distinctions, was always a careful, while Brougham is often an extempore, thinker. Burke is a Cicero, and some-

thing far more; Brougham aspires to be a Demosthenes, and is something far less. Burke reasons philosophically—a mode of ratiocination which, as we have seen, can be employed with advantage on almost all subjects; Brougham reasons geometrically, and is one of those who, according to Aristotle, are sure to err when they turn their mathematical method to moral or mental themes. Burke's process of thought resembles the swift synthetic algebra; Brougham's, the slow, plodding, geometric analysis. Burke had prophetic insight, earnestness, and poetic fire; Brougham has marvellous acuteness, the earnestness of passion, and the fire of temperament. Burke had genuine imagination; Brougham has little or none); and, second, through his prodigious exaggeration of Burke's rivals, who, because they were near and around, appear to him cognate and equal, if not superior; even as St. Peter's is said to be lessened in effect by some tall but tasteless buildings in the neighbourhood; and as the giant Ben Macdhui was long concealed by the lofty but subordinate hills which crush in around him.

Hazlitt, Macaulay, and De Quincey have all seen Burke in a truer light, and praised him in the spirit of a more generous and richer recognition. Hazlitt has made, he tells us, some dozen attempts to describe Burke's style, without pleasing himself—so subtle and evasive he found its elements, and so strange the compound in it of matter-of-fact, speculation, and poetic eloquence. His views of him, too, veered about several times —at least they seem very different in his papers in the *Edinburgh Review*, and in his acknowledged essays; although we believe that at heart he always admired him to enthusiasm, and is often his unconscious imitator. Macaulay has also a thorough appreciation of Burke, the more that he is said to fancy—it is nothing more than a fancy—that there is a striking resemblance between his hero and himself! De Quincey, following in this Coleridge, has felt, and eloquently expressed, his immeasurable contempt for those who praise Burke's fancy at the expense of his intellect. Dr. Croly has published a *Political Life of Burke*, full of eloquence and fervid panegyric, as well as of strong discrimination; Burke is manifestly his master, nor has he found an unworthy disciple. Henry Rogers has edited and prefaced an edition of Burke's works, but the prefixed essay, although able, is hardly worthy of the author of *Reason and Faith*, and its eloquence is of a laborious, mechanical sort. And Hall has, in his "Apology for the Liberty of the Press," which was in part a reply to the *Reflections*,

painted him by a few beautiful touches, less true, however, than they are beautiful; and his pamphlet, although carefully modelled on the writings of his opponent, is not to be named beside them in depth, compass of thought, richness of imagery, or variety and natural vigour of style; his splendour, compared to Burke's, is stiff; his thinking and his imagery imitative—no more than in the case of Macaulay do you ever feel yourself in contact with a "great virgin mind," melting down through the heat and weight of its own exhaustless wealth, although, in absence of fault, stateliness of manner, and occasional polished felicities of expression, Hall is superior even to Burke.

That Burke *was* Junius, we do not believe; but that Burke *had to do* with the composition of some of these celebrated letters, we are as certain as if we had seen his careful front, and dim, but searching eyes looking through his spectacles over the MS. He was notoriously (see Prior's *Life*) in the secret of their authorship. Johnson thought him the only man then alive capable of writing them. Hall's objection, that "Burke's great power was amplification, while that of Junius was condensation," sprung, we think, from a totally mistaken idea of the very nature of Burke's mind. There is far more condensed thinking and writing in many parts of Burke than in Junius—the proof of which is, that no prose writer in the language, except, perhaps, Dean Swift, has had so many single sentences so often quoted. That the *motion* of the mind of Junius differs materially from Burke's, is granted; but we could account for this (even although we contended, which we do not, that he was the sole author), from the awkwardness of the position in which the anonymous would necessarily place him. He would become like a man writing with his left hand. The mask would confine as well as disguise him. He durst not venture on that free and soaring movement which was natural to him. Who ever heard of a man in a mask swaying a broadsword? He always uses a stiletto, or a dagger. Many of the best things in "Junius" are in one of Burke's manners; for, as we have seen, many manners and styles were his. He said to Boswell, in reference to Croft's *Life of Young*, "It is not a good imitation of Johnson: he has the nodosities of the oak, without its strength—the contortions of the sibyl, without her inspiration." Junius says of Sir W. Draper, "He has all the melancholy madness of poetry, without the inspiration." How like to many sentences in Burke are such expressions as these (speaking of Wilkes):—

"The gentle breath of peace would leave him on the surface, unruffled and unremoved; it is only the tempest which lifts him from his place." We could quote fifty pithy sentences from Junius and from Burke, which, placed in parallel columns, would convince an unprejudiced critic that they came from the same mind.[1] It is the union in both of point, polish, and concentration—a union reminding you of the deep yet shining sentences of Tacitus—that establishes the identity. Junius has two salts in his style—the sal acridum, and the sal Atticum. Sir Philip Francis was equal to the supply of the first; Burke alone to that of the second. It adds to the evidence for this theory, that Burke was fond of anonymous writing, and that in it he occasionally "changed his voice," and personated other minds: think of his "Vindication of Natural Society in the Manner of Lord Bolingbroke." He often, too, assisted other writers *sub rosa*, such as Barry and Reynolds, in their prelections on painting. We believe, in short, this to be the truth on the subject: he was in the confidence of the Junius Club—for a club it certainly was; he overlooked many of the letters (Prior asserts that he once or twice spoke of what was to be the substance of a letter the day before it appeared); and he supplied many of his inimitable touches, just as Lord Jeffrey was wont to add spice even to some of Hazlitt's articles in the *Edinburgh Review*. So that he could thus very safely and honestly deny, as he repeatedly did, that he was the author of Junius, and yet be connected with the authorship of the letters.

We come, lastly, to speak of the influences which Burke has exerted upon his and our times. This has been greater than most even of his admirers believe. He was one of the few parent minds which the world has produced. Well does Burns call him "*Daddie* Burke." And both politics and literature owe filial obligations to his unbounded genius. In politics he has been the father of moderate Conservatism, which is, at

[1] Amid the innumerable full-grown beauties, or even hints of beauties, borrowed by after-writers from Burke, we have just noticed one, which MacIntosh, in his famous letter to Hall, has appropriated without acknowledgment. It is where he speaks of Hall turning from literature, etc., to the far nobler task of "*remembering the forgotten*," etc. This grand simplicity, of which MacIntosh was altogether incapable, may be found in Burke's panegyric on Howard. Indeed, we wish we had time to go over Burke's works, and to prove that a vast number of the profound or brilliant things that have since been uttered (disguised or partially altered), in most of our favourite writers on grave subjects, present and past, are *stolen* from the great fountain mind of the eighteenth century. We may do so on some future occasion; and let the plagiarists tremble! Enough at present.

least, a tempering of Toryism, if not its sublimation. That conservatism in politics and in church matters exists now in Britain, is, we believe, mainly owing to the genius of two men—Burke and Coleridge. In literature, too, he set an example that has been widely followed. He unintentionally, and by the mere motion of his powerful mind, broke the chains in which Johnson was binding our style and criticism, without, however, going back himself, or leading back others, to the laxity of the Addisonian manner. All good and vigorous English styles since—that of Godwin, that of Foster, that of Hall, that of Horsley, that of Coleridge, that of Jeffrey, that of Hazlitt, that of De Quincey, that of the *Times* newspaper—are much indebted to the power with which Burke stirred the stagnant waters of our literature, and by which, while professedly an enemy of revolutions, he himself established one of the greatest, most beneficial, and most lasting—that, namely, of a new, more impassioned, and less conventional mode of addressing the intellects and hearts of men.

Latterly, another change has threatened to come over us. Some men of genius have imported from abroad a mangled and mystic Germanism, which has been for awhile the rage. This has not, however, mingled kindly with the current of our literature. The philosophic language or jargon—and it is partly both—of the Teutons has not been well assimilated, or thoroughly digested among us. From its frequent and affected use, it is fast becoming a nuisance. While thinkers have gladly availed themselves of all that is really valuable in its terminology, pretenders have still more eagerly sought shelter for their conceit or morbid weakness under its shield. The stuff, the verbiage, the mystic bewilderment, the affectation, the disguised commonplace, which every periodical almost now teems with, under the form of this foreign phraseology, are enormous, and would require a Swift, in a new *Tale of a Tub*, or *Battle of the Books*, to expose them.

We fancy, however, we see a reaction coming. Great is the Anglo-Saxon, the language of Shakspere and Byron, and it shall yet prevail over the feeble refinements of the small mimics of the Teutonic giants. Germany was long Britain's humble echo and translator. Britain, please God! shall never become *its* shadow. Our thought, too, and faith, which have suffered from the same cause, are in due time to recover; nay, the process of restoration is begun. And among other remedies for the evil, while yet it in a great measure continues, we strongly

recommend a recurrence to the works of our great classics in the past; and, among their bright lists, let not *him* be forgotten, who, apart from his genius, his worth, and his political achievements, has in his works presented so many titles to be considered not only as the *facile princeps* among the writers of his own time (although this itself were high distinction), but as one of the first authors who, in any age or country, ever speculated or wrote.

SHAKSPERE—A LECTURE[1]

If a clergyman, thirty years ago, had announced a lecture on Shakspere, he might, as a postscript, have announced the resignation of his charge, if not the abandonment of his office. Times are now changed, and men are changed along with them. The late Dr. Hamilton of Leeds, one of the most pious and learned clergymen in England, has left, in his *Nugæ Literariæ*, a genial paper on Shakspere, and was never, so far as I know, challenged thereanent. And if you ask me one reason of this curious change, I answer, it is the long-continued presence of the spirit of Shakspere, in all its geniality, breadth, and power, in the midst of our society and literature. He is among us like an unseen ghost, colouring our language, controlling our impressions, if not our thoughts, swaying our imaginations, sweetening our tempers, refining our tastes, purifying our manners, and effecting all this by the simple magic of his genius, and through a medium—that of dramatic writing and representation—originally the humblest, and not yet the highest, form in which poetry and passion have chosen to exhibit themselves. Waiving, at present, the consideration of Shakspere in this form—the dramatist, let us look at him now in his *essence*—the poet. But, first, does any one ask, What is a poet? What is the ideal of the somewhat indefinite, but large and swelling term—poet? I answer, the greatest poet is the man who most roundly, clearly, easily, and strikingly, reflects, represents, and reproduces, in an imaginative form, his own sight or observation, his own heart or feeling, his own history or experience, his own memory or knowledge, his own imagination or dream—sight, heart, history, memory, and imagination, which, so far as they are faithfully represented from his consciousness, do also reflect the consciousness of general humanity. The poet is more a mirror than a maker; he may, indeed, unite with his reflective power others, such as that of forming, infusing into his song, and thereby

[1] This having been originally delivered as a lecture, we have decided that it should retain the shape. "Shakspere: a Sketch," would look, and be, a ludicrous idea. As well a mountain in a flower-pot, as Shakspere in a single sketch. A sketch seeks to draw, at least, an outline of a whole. From a lecture, so much is not necessarily expected. From *A Third Gallery of Literary Portraits*, 1854.

glorifying a particular creed or scheme of speculation; but, just as surely as a rainbow, rising between two opposing countries or armies, is but a feeble bulwark, so, the real power of poetry is, not in conserving, nor in resisting, nor in supporting, nor in destroying, but in meekly and fully reflecting, and yet recreating and beautifying all things. Poetry, said Aristotle, is *imitation;* this celebrated aphorism is only true in one acceptation. If it mean that poetry is in the first instance prompted by a conscious imitation of the beautiful, which gradually blossoms into the higher shape of unconscious resemblance, we demur. But if by imitation is meant the process by which love for the beautiful in art or nature, at first silent and despairing, as the child's affection for the star, strengthens, and strengthens still, till the admired quality is transfused into the very being of the admirer, who then pours it back in eloquence or in song, so sweetly and melodiously, that it seems to be flowing from an original fountain in his own breast; if this be the meaning of the sage when he says that poetry is imitation, he is unquestionably right. Poetry is just the saying Amen, with a full heart and a clear voice, to the varied symphonies of nature, as they echo through the vaulted and solemn aisles of the poet's own soul.

It follows, from this notion of poetry, that in it there is no such thing as *absolute* origination or creation; its Belight simply evolves the element which already has existed amidst the darkness—it does not call it into existence. It follows, again, that the grand distinction between philosophy and poetry is, that while the former tries to trace things to their causes, and to see them as a great naked abstract scheme, poetry catches them as they are, in the concrete, and with all their verdure and flush about them; for even philosophical truths, ere poetry will reflect them, must be personified into life, and thus fitted to stand before her mirror. The ocean does not act as a prism to the sun—does not divide and analyse his light—but simply shows him as he appears to her in the full crown-royal of his beams. It follows still farther, that the attitude of the true poet is exceedingly simple and sublime. He is not an inquirer, asking curious questions at the universe—not a tyrant speculator, applying to it the splendid torture of investigation; his attitude is that of admiration, reception, and praise. He loves, looks, is enlightened, and shines—even as Venus receives and renders back the light of her parent sun.

If, then, the greatest poet be the widest, simplest, and clearest reflector of nature and man, surely we may claim this high

honour for Shakspere—the eighth wonder of the world. "Of all men," says Dryden, "he had the largest and most comprehensive soul!" You find everything included in him, just as you find that the blue sky folds around all things, and after every new discovery made in her boundless domains, seems to retire quietly back into her own greatness, like a queen, and to say, "I am richer than all my possessions;" thus Shakspere never suggests the thought of being exhausted, any more than the sigh of an Æolian lyre, as the breeze is spent, intimates that the mighty billows of the air shall surge no more. Responsive as such a lyre to all the sweet or strong influences of nature, she must cease to speak, ere he can cease to respond. I can never think of that great brow of his, but as a large lake-looking-glass, on which, when you gaze, you see all passions, persons, and hearts: here, suicides striking their own breasts, there, sailors staggering upon drunken shores; here, kings sitting in purple, and there, clowns making mouths behind their backs; here, demons in the shape of man, and there, angels in the form of women; here, heroes bending their mighty bows, and there, hangmen adjusting their greasy ropes; here, witches picking poisons, and culling infernal simples for their caldron, and there, joiners and weavers enacting their piece of very tragical mirth, amid the moonlight of the *Midsummer Night's Dream;* here, statesmen uttering their ancient saws, and there, watchmen finding "modern instances" amid the belated revellers of the streets; here, misanthropes cursing their day, and there, pedlars making merry with the lasses and lads of the village fair; here, Mooncalfs, like Caliban, throwing forth eloquent curses and blasphemy, and there, maidens like Miranda, "sole-sitting" by summer seas, beautiful as foam-bells of the deep; here, fairies dancing like motes of glory across the stage, and there, hush! it is the grave that has yawned, and, lo! the buried majesty of Denmark has joined the motley throng, which pauses for a moment to tremble at his presence. Such the spectacle presented on that great mirror! How busy it is, and yet how still! How melancholy, and yet how mirthful! Magical as a dream, and yet sharp and distinct as a picture! How fluctuating, yet how fixed! "It trembles, but it cannot pass away." It is the world—the world of every age—the miniature of the universe!

The times of Shakspere require a minute's notice in our hour's analysis of his genius. They were times of a vast upheaving in the public mind. Protestantism, that strong man-child, had

newly been born on the continent, and was making wild work in his cradle. Popery, the ten-horned monster, was dying, but dying hard; but over England there lay what might be called a "dim religious light"—being neither the gross darkness of mediæval Catholicism, nor the naked glare of Nonconformity—a light highly favourable to the exercise of imagination—in which dreams seemed realised, and in which realities were softened with the haze of dreams. The Book of God had been brought forth, like Joseph from his dungeon, freed from prison attire and looks—although it had not yet, like him, mounted its chariot of general circulation, and been carried in triumphal progress through the land. The copies of the Scriptures, for the most part, were confined to the libraries of the learned, or else chained in churches. Conceive the impetus given to the poetical genius of the country, by the sudden discovery of this spring of loftiest poetry—conceive it by supposing that Shakspere's works had been buried for ages, and been dug up now. Literature in general had revived; and the soul of man, like an eagle newly fledged, and looking from the verge of her nest, was smelling from afar many a land of promise, and many a field of victory. Add to this, that a New World had recently been discovered; and if California and Australia have come over us like a summer's (golden) cloud, and made not only the dim eye of the old miser gleam with joy, and his hand, perhaps, relax its hold of present, in the view of prospective gold, but made many a young bosom, too, leap at the thought of adventure upon those marvellous shores—and woven, as it were, a girdle of virgin gold round the solid globe—what must have been the impulse and the thrill, when first the bars of ocean were broken up, when all customary landmarks fled away, like the islands of the Apocalyptic vision, and when in their room a thousand lovely dreams seemed retiring, and beckoning as they retired, toward isles of palms, and valleys of enchantment, and mountains ribbed with gold, and seas of perfect peace and sparkling silver, and immeasurable savannahs and forests hid by the glowing west; and when, month after month, travellers and sailors were returning to testify by their tales of wonder that such dreams were true, must not such an ocean of imaginative influence have deposited a rich residuum of genius? And that verily it did, the names of four men belonging to this period are enough to prove; these are, need I say? Edmund Spenser, Walter Raleigh, Francis Bacon, and William Shakspere.

The Life of Shakspere I do not seek to write, and do not

profess to understand, after all that has been written regarding it. Still he seems to me but a shade, without shape, limit, or local habitation; having nothing but power, beauty, and grandeur. I cannot reconcile him to life, present or past. Like a brownie, he has done the work of his favourite household, unheard and unseen. His external history is, in his own language, a blank; his internal, a puzzle, save as we may dubiously gather it from the escapes of his sonnets, and the masquerade of his plays.

> O Cuckoo, shall I call thee bird,
> Or but a wandering voice?

A munificent and modest benefactor, he has knocked at the door of the human family at night; thrown in inestimable wealth as if he had done a guilty thing; and the sound of his feet dying away in the distance is all the tidings he has given of himself.

Indeed, so deep still are the uncertainties surrounding the history of Shakspere, that I sometimes wonder that the process applied by Strauss to the Life of our Saviour has not been extended to his. A Life of Shakspere, on this worthy model, would be a capital exercise for some aspiring sprig of Straussism!

I pass to speak of the qualities of his genius. First of these, I name a quality to which I have already alluded—his universality. He belongs to all ages, all lands, all ranks, all faiths, all professions, all characters, and all intellects. And why? because his eye pierced through all that was conventional, and fastened on all that was eternal in man. He knew that in humanity there was one heart, one nature, and that "God had made of one blood all nations who dwell on the face of the earth." He saw the same heart palpitating through a myriad faces—the same nature shining amid all varieties of customs, manners, languages, and laws—the same blood rolling red and warm below innumerable bodies, dresses, and forms. It was not, mark you, the universality of indifference—it was not that he loved all beings alike—it was not that he liked Iago as well as Imogen, Bottom or Bardolph as well as Hamlet or Othello; but that he saw, and showed, and loved, in proportion to its degree, *so much* of humanity as all possessed. Nature, too, he had watched with a wide yet keen eye. Alike the spur of the rooted pine-tree and the "grey" gleam of the willow leaf drooping over the death-stream of Ophelia—(he was the first in poetry, says Hazlitt, to notice that the leaf is grey only on the side which bends down)—the nest of the temple-haunting

martlet with his "loved masonry," and the eagle eyrie which "buildeth on the cedar's top, and dallies with the wind and scorns the sun"—the forest of Arden, and the "blasted heath of Forres"—the "still vexed Bermoothes, and the woods of Crete"—"the paved fountains," "rushing brooks," "pelting rivers," "the beached margents of the sea," "sweet summer buds," "hoary-headed frosts," "chiding autumn," "angry winter," the "sun robbing the vast sea," and the "moon her pale fire snatching from the sun!"

> Flowers of all hues—
> Hot lavender, mints, savory, marjoram,
> The marigold that goes to bed with the sun,
> And with him rises weeping; daffodils
> That come before the swallow dares, and take
> The winds of March with beauty; violets dim
> But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
> Or Cytherea's breath—pale primroses,
> That die unmarried ere they can behold
> Bright Phœbus in his strength—
> ——————bold ox lips and
> The Crown, Imperial—lilies of all kinds"—

such are a few of the natural objects which the genius of Shakspere has transplanted into his own garden, and covered with the dew of immortality. He sometimes lingers beside such lovely things, but more frequently he touches them as he is hurrying on to an object. He paints as does the lightning, which, while rushing to its aim, shows in fiery relief all intermediate objects. Like an arrowy river, his mark is the sea, but every cloud, tree, and tower is reflected on its way, and serves to beautify and to dignify the waters. Frank, all-embracing, and unselecting is the motion of his genius. Like the sun-rays, which, secure in their own purity and directness, pass fearlessly through all deep, dark, intricate, or unholy places—equally illustrate the crest of a serpent and the wing of a bird, pause on the summit of an ant-hillock as well as on the brow of Mont Blanc—take up as a little thing alike the crater of the volcano and the shed cone of the pine, and after they have, in one wide charity, embraced all shaped and sentient things, expend their waste strength and beauty upon the inane space beyond—thus does the imagination of Shakspere count no subject or object too low, and none too high, for its comprehensive and incontrollable sweep.

I have named *impersonality*, as his next quality. The term seems strange and rare—the thing is scarcer still: I mean by it that Shakspere, when writing, thought of nothing but his sub-

ject, never of himself. Snatching from an Italian novel, or an ill-translated Plutarch's Lives, the facts of his play, his only question was, Can these dry bones live? How shall I impregnate them with force, and make them fully express the meaning and beauty which they contain? Many writers set to work in a very different style: one in all his writings wishes to magnify his own powers, and his solitary bravo is heard resounding at the close of every paragraph. Another wishes to imitate another writer—a base ambition, pardonable only in children. A third, scorning slavish imitation, wishes to emulate some one school or class of authors. A fourth writes deliberately and professedly *ad captandum vulgus*. A fifth, worn to dregs, is perpetually wishing to imitate his former doings, like a child crying to get yesterday back again. Shakspere, when writing, thought no more of himself, or other authors, than the sun when shining thinks of Sirius, of the stars composing the Great Bear, or of his own proud array of beams.

This unconsciousness, or impersonality, I have always held to be the highest style of genius. I am aware, indeed, of a subtle objection. It has been said by a high authority—John Sterling—that men of genius are conscious, not of what is peculiar in the individual, but of what is universal in the race; of what characterises, not a man, but man; not of their own individual genius, but of the Great Spirit moving within their minds. Yet what in reality is this but the unconsciousness for which the author, to whom Sterling is replying, contends. When we say that men of genius, in their highest moods, are unconscious, we mean, not that these men become the mere tubes through which a foreign influence descends, but that certain emotions or ideas so fill and possess them, as to produce temporary forgetfulness of themselves, save as the passive though intelligent instruments of the feeling or the thought. It is true that afterwards self may suggest the reflection—the fact that we have been selected to receive and convey such melodies proves our breadth and fitness—it is from the oak, not the reed, that the wind elicits its deepest music; but, in the first place, this thought never takes place at the same time with the true afflatus, and is almost inconsistent with its presence—it is a mere after inference;—an inference, secondly, which is not always made;—nay, thirdly, an inference which is often rejected, when the prophet, off the stood, feels tempted to regard with suspicion or shuddering disgust the result of his raptured hour of inspiration. Milton seems to have shrunk back at

the retrospect of the height he had reached in the *Paradise Lost*, and preferred his *Paradise Regained*. Shakspere, having written his tragic miracles under a more entire self-abandonment, became in his sonnets, owing to a reflex act of sagacity, aware of what feats he had done. Bunyan is carried on, through all the stages of his immortal pilgrimage, like a child in the leading-strings of her nurse, but, after looking back upon its contemplated course, begins, with all the harmless vanity of a child (see the prefatory poem to the second part), to crow over the achievement. Burns, while composing "Tam o' Shanter," felt little else than the animal rapture of the excitement; it dawned on him afterwards that he had produced his finest poem. Thus all gifted spirits do best when they know not what they do. The boy Tell was great,

Nor knew how great he was.

I mention next his humanity. It was said of Burns, that if you had touched his hand it would have burned yours. And although Shakspere, being a far broader and greater, was, consequently, a calmer man, yet I would not have advised any very timid person to have made the same experiment with him. Poor Hartley Coleridge wrote a clever paper, in *Blackwood*, entitled, "Shakspere a Tory and a Gentleman;" I wish some one had answered it, under the title, "Shakspere a Radical and a Man." A man's heart beats in his every line. He loves, pities, feels for, as well as with, the meanest of his fellow "human mortals." He addresses men as brothers, and as brothers have they responded to his voice.

I need scarcely speak of his simplicity. He was a child as well as a man. His poetry, in the language of Pitt, comes "sweetly from nature." It is a "gum" oozing out without effort or consciousness: occasionally, indeed (for I do not, like the Germans, believe in the infallibility of Shakspere), he condescends to indite a certain swelling, rumbling bombast, especially when he is speaking through the mouth of kings; but even his bombast comes rolling out with an ease and a gusto, a pomp and a prodigality, which are quite delightful. Shakspere's nonsense is like no other body's nonsense. It is always the nonsense of a great genius. A dignitary of the Church of England went once to hear Robert Hall. After listening with delight to that great preacher, he called at his house. He found him lying on the floor, with his children performing somersets over him. He lifted up his hands in wonder, and exclaimed,

"Is that the great Robert Hall?"—"Oh," replied Hall, "I have all my nonsense out of the pulpit, you have all yours in it." So Shakspere, after having done a giant's work, could take a giant's recreation; and were he returning to earth, would nearly laugh himself dead again, at the portentous attempts of some of his critics to prove his nonsense sense, his blemishes beauties, and his worst puns fine wit!

The subtlety of Shakspere is one of his most wonderful qualities. Coleridge used to say, that he was more of a philosopher than a poet. His penetration into motives, his discernment of the most secret thoughts and intents of the heart, his discrimination of the delicate shades of character, the manner in which he makes little traits tell large tales, the complete grasp he has of all his characters, whom he lifts up and down like ninepins, the innumerable paths by which he reaches similar results, the broad, comprehensive maxims on life, manners, and morals, which he has scattered in such profusion over his writings, the fact that he never repeats a thought, figure, or allusion, the wonderful art he has of identifying himself with all varieties of humanity—all proclaim the inexhaustible and infinite subtlety of his genius, and, when taken in connection with its power and loftiness, render him the prodigy of poets and of men. I once, when a student, projected a series of essays, entitled "Sermons on Shakspere," taking for my texts some of those profound and far-reaching sentences, which abound in him, where you have the fine gold, which is the staple of his works, collected in little knots, or nuggets of thick gnarled magnificence. It was this quality in him which made a French author say, that, were she condemned to select three volumes for her whole library, the three would be, Bacon's Essays, the Bible, and Shakspere. You can never open a page of his dramas without being startled at the multitude of sentences which have been, and are perpetually being, quoted. The proverbs of Shakspere, were they selected, would be only inferior to the proverbs of Solomon.

When I name purity as another quality of this poet, I may be thought paradoxical. And yet, when I remember his period, his circumstances, the polluted atmosphere which he breathed; when I compare his writings with those of contemporary dramatists; when I weigh him in the scales with many of our modern authors; and when I remember that his writings never seek to corrupt the imagination, to shake the principles, or to influence the passions of men, I marvel how thoroughly his

genius has saved him, harmless, amid formidable difficulties, and say, that Marina, in his own "Pericles," did not come forth more triumphantly scathless, than does her poet. Let those who prate of Shakspere's impurity first of all read him candidly; secondly, read, *if they can*, Massinger, or Beaumont and Fletcher; and, thirdly, if they have Bowdler's contemptible *Family Shakspere*, fling it into the fire, and take back the unmutilated copy to their book-shelves and their bosoms. The moonlight is not contaminated by shining on a dunghill, and neither is the genius of Shakspere by touching transiently, on its way to higher regions, upon low, loathsome, or uncertain themes. His language is sometimes coarse, being that of his age; his spirit, belonging to no age (would I could say the same of Burns, Byron, Moore, and Eugene Sue), is always clean, healthy, and beautiful.

His imagination and fancy are nearly equal, and, like two currents of air, are constantly interpenetrating. They seem twins—the one male, the other female. Not only do both stand ever ready to minister to the subtlest and deepest motions of his intellect, and all the exigencies of his plots (like spray, which decorates the river, when running under ground, as well as when shining in the sunlight), but he has, besides, committed himself to several distinct trials of the strength of both. The caldron in *Macbeth* stands up an unparalleled collection of dark and powerful images, all shining as if shown in hell-fire, and accompanied by a dancing, mirthful measure, which adds unspeakably to their horror. It is as though a sentence of death were given forth in doggerel. And, for light and fanciful figures, we may take either Titania's speech to the Fairies, or the far-famed description of Queen Mab by Mercutio. In these passages, artistic aim is for a season abandoned. A single faculty, like a horse from a chariot stud, breaks loose, and revels and riots in the fury of its power.

Shakspere's wit and humour are bound together in general by the amiable band of good-nature. What a contrast to Swift! He loathes; Shakspere, at the worst, hates. His is the slavering and ferocious ire of a maniac; Shakspere's, that of a man. Swift broods like their shadow over the festering sores and the moral ulcers of humanity; Shakspere touches them with a ray of poetry, which beautifies, if it cannot heal. *Gulliver* is the day-book of a fiend; *Timon* is the magnificent outbreak of an injured angel. His wit, how fertile, quick, forgetive! Congreve and Sheridan are poor and forced in the comparison. How long

they used to sit hatching some clever conceit; and what a cackling they made when it had chipped the shell! Shakspere threw forth a Mercutio or a Falstaff at once, each embodying in himself a world of laughter, and there an end. His humour, how broad, rich, subtle, powerful, and full of genius and geniality it is! Why, Bardolph's red nose eclipses all the dramatic characters that have succeeded. Ancient Pistol himself shoots down the whole of the Farquhars, Wycherleys, Sheridans, Goldsmiths, and Colmans, put together. Dogberry is the prince of donkeys, past, present, and to come. When shall we ever have such another tinker as Christopher Sly? Sir Andrew Aguecheek! the very name makes you *quake* with laughter. And like a vast sirloin of English roast beef, rich and dripping, lies along the mighty Falstaff, with humour oozing out of every corner and cranny of his vast corporation.

Byron describes man as a pendulum, between a smile and tear. Shakspere, the representative of humanity, must weep as well as laugh, and his tears, characteristically, must be large and copious. What variety, as well as force, in his pathetic figures! Here pines in the centre of the forest the melancholy Jacques, musing tenderly upon the sad pageant of human life, finding sermons in stones, although not "good in everything," now weeping beside a weeping deer, and now bursting out into elfish laughter, at the "fool" he found in the forest. Here walks and talks, in her guilty and desperate sleep, the Fiend Queen of Scotland, lighted on her way by the fire that never shall be quenched, which is already kindled around her, seeking in vain to sweeten her "little" hand, on which there is a spot with which eternity must deal, and yet moving you to weep for her as you tremble. Here turns away from men for ever the haughty Timon, seeking his low grave beside, and his only mourner in, the everlasting brine of the sea. Here the noble Othello, mad with imaginary wrongs, bends over the bed of Desdemona, and kisses ere he kills the purest and best of women. Here Juliet awakes too late from her fatal sleep, and finds a dead lover where she had hoped to find a living husband. Here poor Ophelia, garlanded with flowers, sinks into her pool of death—a pool which might again and again have been replenished from the tears which her story has started. And here, once king of England, but now king of the miserable in every clime—once wise in everything but love, now sublime in madness—once wearing a royal coronet, now crowned with the howling blackness of heaven above his grey dishevelled locks—

once clad in purple, now wreathing around him fantastic wreaths of flowers—it is Lear who cries aloud—

> Ye heavens!
> If ye do love old men, if your sweet sway
> Hallow obedience, if *yourselves are old*,
> Make it your cause—avenge me of my daughters.

That Shakspere is the greatest genius the world ever saw is acknowledged now by all sane men; for even France has, at last, after many a reluctant struggle, fallen into the procession of his admirers. But that Shakspere also is out of all sight and measure the finest artist that ever constructed a poem or drama, is a less general, and yet a growing belief. By no mechanical rules, indeed, can his works be squared. But tried, as all great works should be, by principles of their own—principles which afterwards control and create their true criticism (for it is the office of the critic to find out and expound the elements which mingled in the original inspiration—not to test them by a preconceived and arbitrary standard), and when, especially, you remember the object contemplated by the poet, that of mirroring the motley life of man, his works appear as wonderful in execution as in conception. Their very faults are needed to prove them human, otherwise their excellences would have classed them with the divine.

It is amusing to read the criticism which the eighteenth century passed upon Shakspere. They did not, in fact, know very well what to make of him. They walked and talked "about him, and about him." I am reminded of the astonishment felt by the inhabitants of Lilliput at the discovery of Gulliver, the "Man Mountain." One critic mounted on a ladder to get a nearer view of the phenomenon. Another peered at him through a telescope. A third insisted on strapping him down by the ligatures of art. A fourth measured his size geometrically. But all agreed, that, although much larger, he was much coarser and uglier than themselves; and expressed keen regret that so much strength was not united with more symmetry. He seemed to them a monster, not a man. Voltaire, with the dauntless effrontery of a monkey, called him an enormous dunghill, with a few pearls scattered upon it—unconscously thereby re-enacting the part of Dogberry, and degrading from the monkey into the ass.

In our day all this is changed. Shakspere no more seems a large lucky barbarian, with wondrous powers growing wild and struggling, but a wise man, wisely managing the most magni-

ficent gifts. His art—whether you regard it as moulding his individual periods, or as regulating his plays—seems quite as wonderful as his genius. Men criticise now even the successful battles of Napoleon, and seek very learnedly to show that he ought not to have gained them, and that by all the rules of war it was very ridiculous in him to gain them. But Shakspere's great victories can stand every test, and are seen not only to be triumphs of overwhelming genius, but of consummate skill.

Ere glancing at his plays individually, I would, first of all, try to divide them under various classes. The division which occurs to me as the best, is that of his metaphysical, his imaginative, his meditative, his passionate, his historical, and his comic dramas. His metaphysical plays are, properly speaking, only two—*Macbeth* and *King Lear*. I call them metaphysical, not in the common sense, but in Shakspere's own sense of the word. Lady Macbeth says—

> Hie thee hither,
> That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,
> And chastise with the valour of my tongue,
> All that impedes thee from the golden round,
> Which fate and *metaphysical* aid doth seem,
> To have thee crown'd withal.

Metaphysics means here an agency beyond nature, and at the same time evil. Now, in *Macbeth*, it is this metaphysical power which, through the witches, controls like destiny the whole progress of the play. In *Lear*, not only does destiny brood over the whole, but the hell-dog of madness—which in Shakspere is metaphysical power—is let loose. In some other plays, it is true, he introduces superhuman agents, but in these two alone all the springs seem moved by a dark unearthly power. By his imaginative plays, I mean those where his principal object is to indulge that one stupendous faculty of his. Such are the *Tempest* and the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. These are selections from his dream-book. By his meditative plays, I mean those in which incident, passion, and poetry are made subservient to the workings of subtle and reckless reflection. Such are *Hamlet*, *Timon*, and *Measure for Measure*. His passionate plays —for example, *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*—are designed to paint, whether in simple or compound form, whether stationary, progressive, or interchanging, the passions of humanity. His historical and comic plays explain themselves. All his plays, indeed, have more or less of all those qualities, "floating, mingling, interweaving." But I have thus arranged them according to the master element and purpose of each.

Let me select one of the different classes for rapid analysis. And I feel myself, first of all, attracted toward the weird and haggard tragedy of *Macbeth*. And, first, in this play we must notice again its *metaphysical* character. A nightmare from hell presses down all the story and all the characters. From the commencement of the race to its close, there is a fiend—*the* fiend sitting behind the rider, and at every turn of the dark descending way you hear his suppressed or his resounding laughter. All is out of nature. The ground reels below you. The play is a caldron, mixed of such ingredients as the Weird Sisters, a blasted heath, an air-drawn dagger, the blood-boltered ghost of a murdered man rising to sup with his murderer, lamentings heard in the air, strange screams of death, horses running wild and eating each other, a desperate king asking counsel at the pit of Acheron, an armed head, a bloody child, child crowned and with a tree in his hand, and eight kings rising from the abyss to answer his questions, a moving forest, a sleep-walking and suicide queen—such are some of the ingredients which a cloudy hand seems to shed into the broth, till it bubbles over with terror and blood. It is not a tragedy, but a collection of tragedies—the death of Duncan being one, that of Banquo another, that of Macduff's family another, that of Lady Macbeth another, and that of Macbeth himself a fifth. And yet the master has so managed them, by varying their character and circumstances, and relieving them by touches of imagination, that there is no repletion—we "sup," but not "full," of horrors. By his so potent art, he brings it about, that his supernatural and human persons never jostle. You never wonder at finding them on the stage together; they meet without a start, they part without a shiver; they obey one power, and you feel, that not only does one touch of nature make the "whole world kin," but that it can link the universe in one brotherhood. It is the humanity which bursts out of every corner and crevice of this drama, like grass and wild flowers from a ruin, that reconciles you to its otherwise intolerable desolation.

This crowding in, and heaping up, distinguished the style, sentiment, imagery, and characters, as well as the incidents of *Macbeth*. It is a short play, but the style is uniformly massive—the sentiment and imagery are rich to exuberance—the characters stand out, mild or terrible wholes distinct from each other as statues, even when dancing their wild dance together, to the music of Shakspere's magical genius. Banquo, Duncan,

Macduff, and Malcolm, have all this distinct colossal character. But the most interesting persons in the drama are the witches, Macbeth, and his dark Ladye! What unique creations the witches are! Borderers between earth and hell, they have most of the latter. Their faces are faded, and their raiment withered in its fires. Their age seems supernatural; their ugliness, too, is not of the earth. A wild mirth mingles with their malice; they have a certain strange sympathy with their victims; they fancy them, and toy with Macbeth while destroying him, as a cat with a mouse. They do not ride on broomsticks, nor even on winds; their motions have a dream-like rapidity and ease. They are connected, too, with a mythology of Shakspere's own making, perfectly new and complete. They come and go, and you are left in total uncertainty as to their nature, origin, and history, and must merely say, "the air hath bubbles as the water hath. And these are of them." Altogether, they are the most singular daughters of Shakspere; and you wonder what Desdemona, Cordelia, and Imogen would have thought of their Weird Sisters.

Next comes the gloomy tyrant of Scotland. I figure him as a tall, strong, dark-haired, dark-eyed, black-browed mountaineer, possessing originally a strong, if not a noble nature. Ambition is dropped like hagseed by the fiends into his bosom, and in the progress of its growth makes him first a murderer, and ultimately a desperate madman. Not natively cruel, he at last, from the necessities of his career, must dine, breakfast, and supper on blood. Yet there is something to me exceedingly pensive as well as sublime in all the actions and utterances of Macbeth's despair. It is a powerful nature at bay, and his language, in its fierce sweep—its lurid magnificence—its lofty yet melancholy tone—its wild moralising, reminds us of that which Milton puts into the mouth of the Prince of Darkness. Hear the celebrated lines:—

Mac. Wherefore was that cry?
Sey. The queen, my lord, is dead.
Mac. She should have died hereafter,
There would have been time for such a word—
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow;
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle,
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

How terribly has despair concentrated and sharpened the intellect which can, in the crisis of its fate, thus moralise. I have sometimes compared Macbeth to Saul the unhappy King of Israel. Like him, he has risen from a lower station; like him, he has cemented his tottering throne by blood; like him, he is possessed by an evil spirit; like him, at last he becomes desperate. Macbeth hies to consult the Weird Sisters; Saul, the Philistines being upon him—David at a distance—Samuel dead—God refusing to answer him by Urim, or prophets, or dreams—goes in his extremity and knocks at the door of hell.

About Lady Macbeth there has been much needless critical discussion. Some have painted her in colours supernaturally dark and deformed, another and more hideous Hecate. Others have, in defending, gone so far as to make her almost amiable; who, I suppose, kissed as she killed the sleeping grooms. I can coincide with neither of those notions—if, indeed, the latter have formed itself into a proper and solid notion. I look upon Lady Macbeth as a female shape of her husband—his shadow in the other sex—a specimen of the different effects which the same passion produces upon different sexes. The better the sex, the worse are the evil consequences, *corruptio optumæ pessuma*. Even as a female infidel, or a female debauchee is incomparably worse than a male in similar predicaments; so with a female murderer—one drained of all the feelings of humanity by the prevalence of a bad ambition. Foster speaks of Lady Macbeth's pure demoniac firmness—meaning to intimate that she was originally worse than her husband, but, in reality, well describing the more total and terrible induration which vice or cruelty produces in a female bosom. It makes man a butcher, and woman a fiend. These very terms, indeed, are applied through Malcolm to the pair:—

> The dead butcher and his fiend-like queen

—words which, though uttered through the voice of an enemy, seem intended to convey Shakspere's own notion of their ultimate characters: only Macbeth must be admitted to have become an inspired butcher ere the close!

And how thoroughly in keeping their different dooms! Macbeth, having sinned as a man, dies like a man, in broad battle, with harness on his back, yielding rather to destiny than to the foe. His lady, having offended against the nobler code, and the higher nature of woman, has a different fate. After long internal anguish, expressed not to the full, even by

her awful sleep, she perishes by her own hand. Woman, inferior it may be to man in intellect, is so far superior in moral qualities, that when these are violated, the pillars of humanity shake, and destruction, in one or other of its forms, must avenge the outrage committed against the very highest feelings of human nature.

From his imaginative plays I select the *Tempest*. I said before, that in poetry there was no absolute origination. If anything could induce me to recall this opinion, it were the recollection of this marvellous play. It rises before us as the New World to the eye of Columbus, fresh, peopled with strange forms, glittering with dew, and radiant in sunshine. As in *Macbeth*, all is strange, but, unlike it, all is glad and genial. Its magic is mild and harmless. The lightnings of this tempest affright, but they do not burn. The isle is full of noises, but they are most of them soothing and musical—

> Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
> Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
> Will hum about mine ears, and sometimes voices,
> That, if I waked after long sleep,
> Will make me sleep again.

Here all the stern laws both of nature and of the world are repealed. The very villains of the play are treated with lenity — exposed — countermined — but not punished. And what beauty shines in this lonely place from the face of Miranda, the fairest, simplest, noblest female ever made by genius. And what aerial life is given to the scene, by the presence of Ariel, that gay creature of the elements, light as the down of the thistle, yet powerful as the thunderbolt, so *delicate* in the discharge of his mighty tasks, possessed at once of omnipotence and of *tact*, and whose songs have in them a snatch of the sphere music. Hear him, in the prospect of liberty, singing—

> Where the bee sucks, there suck I;
> In a cowslip's bell I lie:
> There I couch where owls do cry,
> On the bat's back I do fly,
> After summer, merrily:
> Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,
> Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

And what a savage seal-skin ornament to the whole is the redoubted Caliban—the misshapen Mooncalf—rude, revengeful, ignorant, lustful, and who yet caught in this enchanted circle, and surrounded by the influences of this magic isle, when sober speaks, and when drunk belches out the finest imagination and poetry.

Surely Shakspere, when he wrote the *Tempest*, must have been in the gladdest of all his moods. I fancy him writing it on the first week of a beautiful spring, when nature leaps at once out of the icy grasp of winter into summer's full flush and glory, and when every heart leaps in unison, and finds a new joy and life-like heaven suddenly infused into it, and life, love, beauty, and joy, seem for a season to compose all the categories of being.

Hamlet is Shakspere's grand poetical puzzle, confessedly the most intellectual of all his dramas, and expresses most fully, although by no means most clearly, the results of his deep, subtle, and long-continued musings upon man, and all the strange phenomena by which, in this little life of his, he is surrounded.

Coleridge once remarked, that Shakspere never seems to have come to his full height, else he had not been a man, but a monster. Had he written, we may add, ten plays equal to *Hamlet*, this monstrous growth had been complete. Its wisdom, so deep and varied—its calm mastery—its profusion of incidents and characters—the skill with which the most contradictory elements, from a ghost to a gravedigger, are harmonised—the philosophic self-possession, united to the burning passion and the imaginative interest—the combination of breadth and length, of height and depth—the mere size of the canvas chosen—the mystic uncertainty of the whole co-existing with singular clearness and finish in most of the parts—the rapidity of the transitions—the unflagging spirit of the dialogue, and the energy of the soliloquies—all go to constitute it a unique amid a world of uniques, the most wonderful of wonders, the most Shaksperian of Shakspere's works. Shakspere, in *Hamlet*, seems *growing* into that somewhat greater than himself, for which at present we want a name, and was arrested, we might almost think, while becoming the *tertium quid* between man and a superior order of intelligences.

It is the point of view maintained in *Hamlet* which gives it its peculiar power as a meditative play. Hamlet is a man loosened in a great measure from earth, although not utterly exasperated against it. He sees it not at the point of the misanthrope, nor altogether at that of the maniac, but at that of one who is half-way toward *both* these characters. His sadness casts a moonlight of contemplation around all things, which, as it shines, now twists them into odd and mirthful attitudes, invests them now with shadowy horror, and now

with pleasing gloom. Man and woman have both ceased to delight him, but have not ceased to be objects of eager interest, curiosity, and speculation. Driven by circumstances and temperament toward an insulated position, he pauses, in his full retreat from mankind, to record his impressions of them. Madame Roland, on her way to the scaffold, wished she had been able to record the strange thoughts which were rising in her mind. So Hamlet—a wounded deer seeking the forest of death, separated from men for ever—*has*, in immortal soliloquies, in pungent lines, in wild and whirling words, or in wilder laughter, uttered the strange ideas which he felt flocking around his mind. Profound as wisdom itself are many of those thoughts, and expressed in sentences of the most compact significance.

But this characteristic extends to the whole play. Hamlet has infected all the subordinate characters with his own wisdom. Old Polonius talks at times like another Dr. Johnson; Ophelia is far too wise for one so young; the king himself hiccups aphorisms; and the ghost, while he says, "Brief must I be, I smell the hour of dawn," makes up for the brevity by the pith of his speeches. Indeed, had *Hamlet* appeared in this century, we should have said, that it was constructed on the principle of bringing in all the fine thoughts which had been accumulating for years on the pages of its author's note-book. But such a practice was, in Shakspere's day, unknown; and, in a writer of his rich and spontaneous power, is unlikely, if not impossible.

In *Hamlet*, strong distemperature of mind ministers the principal part of the interest. It is so, too, with his *Winter's Tale*, his *Othello*, his *Timon of Athens*, his *King Lear*, and his *Macbeth*. These are dreams of Shakspere's darker moods, for the smile of the "gentle Willy" disguised often wild tumults of thought and feeling, and resembled that red morning sunshine which introduces long days of tempest. There was a vein in Shakspere's heart running in a deep and secret channel seldom disclosed, but which found now and then a fearful vent in his impersonations of the jealous lover, the maniac, the misanthrope, the murderous king, or the wild, changeful, witty, exasperated, and more than half-maddened prince. In these he is thoroughly in earnest; the large iron which has pierced a large soul is boldly displayed; and, under a thin mask, you see the biggest of human hearts agitated to agony, and the most sweet-blooded of men doing well to be angry even unto death. It is terribly sublime to stand by the shore of an angry Shakspere, and to see him, like the troubled sea, casting out a furious, yet

rainbow-tinted spray, against the hollowness and the abuses of human society, and making sport, for a season, of man himself! Thus Timon seems to fling his platters of hot water *past* his flatterers upon humanity at large; thus Lear shrieks up questions to the heavens, which make the gloomy curtains of night to shiver; thus Macbeth, when not hewing at his enemies, is cutting, with a like desperate hand, at the problems of human life and destiny; and thus Hamlet, while dancing on his wild erratic way to his uncle's death, tramples on many an ancient saw, and makes many a popular error to tremble below his uncontrollable feet.

This did not, as some might imagine, arise from the necessity of fully impersonating certain eccentric characters; for, first, why did he create or select such characters at all? and, secondly, could he have presented them with such effect without profound sympathy for them? Shakspere was not a mere mimic or mocking-bird: he spoke out of the abundance of a universal heart, he reproduced himself in many of his characters, and his frequent choice and *con amore* treatment of dark and morbid subjects, seem conclusively to show that there was a fever somewhere in his own system, although it has often been identified, and that, on the whole, justly, with all that is genial and gentle. It was, indeed, *a priori* impossible that a being who formed the microcosm and mirror of humanity should not reflect its shadows as well as its lights; and that, as the representative of man, he should not pass through man's hour of darkness.

There is no play in all Shakspere's works, if we, perhaps, except *Timon* and *Lear*, where the interest and power are so inextricably interwoven with the main character as in *Hamlet*. *He* is the play. Compared to him, the other characters seem shadows as unsubstantial as his father's ghost. That ghost himself is hardly so interesting as his son. Like shadows swaying to the motions of their substances, do the various characters obey Hamlet's changeful whims, yield to his tempestuous rage, and echo his wild wisdom. Never was the overbearing influence of one driven on the wind of destiny, over idle and commonplace personages, more powerfully displayed. Truly, the slightest whisper of real despair is thunder, its merest touch is iron, its breath an irresistible tempest! It will bespeak a visitor from the other world, "although all hell should yawn;" it will make "a ghost" of any one who dares to stand in its fierce way.

Many critics, while seeking to unravel the mystery of Hamlet's

character, have omitted to notice what is the main moral and purpose of the play—that is, unquestionably, to show the ramified wretchedness springing from crime. This it is which is the root of all the mischief and calamity in the play. This disturbs the grave, embroils the state, infuriates and half deranges the great soul of Hamlet, and is avenged by the successive deaths of Polonius, Ophelia, Hamlet, the king, the queen, and Laertes. *This* object of the poet is thoroughly gained. Nemesis is left sitting upon heaps of carcasses, and surveying with an iron smile the manifold and mingling streams of blood, which are all traceable to the one murder in the garden. And the moral is—crime never speaks without being answered by echo upon echo from the rocks of eternal justice; and, in the ruin which follows, the innocent are often as deeply involved as the guilty.

Shakspere, no doubt, puts into the mouths of his characters words which might seem to accuse Providence. Hamlet, in one of his last speeches, calls it a "harsh world." And Horatio's language, when, in summing up the whole eventful history, he speaks of

> Cruel, bloody, and unnatural acts,
> Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
> Purposes mistook,

is hardly that of profound faith. But both are speaking from partial and one-sided points of view; whereas the spirit of the whole play, and many of the words, go to teach us that in everything there is a purpose, that Providence "commends the poisoned chalice" to the lips of those who have mingled it, and that the inequalities and gaps which do exist in the administration of human affairs are but the open mouths of a general cry for a scene of more perfect retribution in another world.

But two deductions from the catastrophe of Hamlet seem possible: the one, that this world is a mere atheistic hubbub, the scene of innumerable wrongs—wrongs, too, mixing and intertwining for evermore, and which are never to be redressed; or that there must be a future state. We advise any one who is doubtful as to which of these conclusions Shakspere wished us to draw, first to ponder the impression left on his own mind as he rises from the perusal of the play, for that, let him depend on it, is the impression the poet meant to leave; and then to read carefully Hamlet's several soliloquies, and the soliloquy of the miserable king. In these, and throughout the play, the power of conscience, the supremacy of the "canons of the

Eternal," the existence of a future world, and the influence of prayer with God, are recognised in language so decided, and in a manner so sincere, that we are led, and many may be driven, to the conviction, that this most profound of dramas—this broadest of all panoramic views of human nature, and life, and destiny—a view caught on the shuddering brink and from the fearful angle of all but madness—is not a libel upon the Divine Author like the *Cenci*, nor a pæan sheathed in blasphemy like the *Faust*, but that, in spirit, tone, and language, it doth

> Assert Eternal Providence,
> And vindicate the ways of God to man.

And if *Hamlet* explains not, and if it even deepens in some measure the mystery of human guilt, it at the same time proclaims, trumpet-tongued, the clear certainty of present punishment, and the strong probability of future retribution.

What Shakspere's theological creed was, we do not profess to know. An author recently maintains that he was an ideal pantheist, and quotes in proof of it his words in *Macbeth*—" we are such stuff as dreams are made of," and the famous finale of Prospero. But Prospero's speech is merely a paraphrase of the Scripture statement—" all these things shall be dissolved." And Macbeth's words are more in keeping with the moment in his history, when, in the prospect of death, and in the madness of desperate guilt, all things were becoming unreal and swimming around his vision, than they are expressive of his Creator's calm and settled opinion. The murderer is hunted back into the refuge of atheism, and, sleepless himself, would seek to identify sleep and death. " Our little life is rounded with a sleep." As if he said, with a ghastly smile—" sleep has forsaken me, and thus rendered my life a hideous fragment, a yawning chasm; but death cannot so fly: it must close and complete my career." But he who speaks of " sleep " with Macbeth, speaks also of " *dreams* " with Hamlet. Whatever Shakspere's notion of *religious* matters, however, might be, it is interesting to know that his theory of *morals*, as it may be gathered from his greater and more serious plays, is essentially sound. This may not appear to some a matter of much consequence; but, as it is pleasing now and then to turn from commonplace clocks, and to learn the hour from a sun-dial, so we like sometimes to look away from systems of moral philosophy, to the living and sunlit tables of this great master of human nature. To others, again, his deliverances on such subjects may possibly seem oracular, as from a new Dodona seated among the oaks of the Avon.

The intellectual and poetical qualities of Shakspere find in *Hamlet* ample scope for display. It is the longest of his dramas, and, at the same time, the richest. The sun of semi-madness, vertical above, has produced a wild and tropical luxuriance of imagery. Every sentence is starred. No play of his contains at once so much sense and so much nonsense, so much bombastic verse and so much dense and pointed prose, so much extravagant licence of fancy and so much profound insight. And so broad is the canvas, that there is ample room in it for all those extremes: they never interfere or jostle; the profoundest practical philosophy and the wildest raving here meet together: "vice and a radiant angel" embrace each other; and Billingsgate like that of a drab, and eloquence and apprehension like that of a god, are united, if not reconciled. It is this exceeding comprehension of view which has rendered *Hamlet* the true "Psalm of Life," exhibiting it, not partially, or by selection, or in colours, but calotyping it calmly and sternly as a mystic, fantastical, but real *whole*.

Across this broad picture, Shakspere has caused to shoot one ray from the unseen world. We refer, of course, to the ghost. There is nothing which shows more the delicate and masterly handling of a Creator (who loves, understands, and treats tenderly his own children, not, like a plagiarist and stepfather, ignorantly and despitefully uses them) than the management of this awful visitor. The words "horribly beautiful" are applicable to him, and to him alone. There is not one vulgar element about him. He is—shall we say?—a perfect gentleman, and has a "courteous action." One desire, that of revenge, burns in his bosom, but it burns rather against the crime than the criminal. He leaves his wife "to Heaven, and to the thorns" in her own breast. In his last appearance, while the queen is affrighted at Hamlet's ecstacy, he tells him, in compassion, to "step between her and her fighting soul." And how admirably has Shakspere caught the true shape, form, and figure of a spiritual being, such as we at present conceive of it! He is not a vague vapour: he is "clad in complete steel;" his beard is visible, "a sable silvered;" his "beaver is up;" his countenance is "very pale," but "more in sorrow than in anger;" he has come from literal "fire," and his thoughts, feelings, and language, resemble those of one still in the flesh. And yet, around the steel, and the beaver, and the beard, there hangs a haze of spiritual mystery and terror, which lends and receives effect from the materialism of the apparition. He

" vanishes at the crowing of the cock." He passes, like heat, through the solid ground. Shakspere has thus avoided the extremes of representing a ghost in too shadowy or too gross a light—of spinning this grisly thread too thickly or too thin—to homespun or to gossamer. His shadow is something of a substance, and his substance is something of a shade.

And such a nondescript form, too, appears at first Hamlet himself—a ghost among men, the phantom son of a phantom sire, neither a hero nor a coward, neither right flesh and blood nor a mere abstraction, armed, like Satan, " with what *seemed* both sword and shield," and yet, like him, shrinking away, at times, from the contest. He stands between the living and the dead, and seems to disdain all critical classification. He may be compared to one of those shifting shapes, met with in water, mist, or cloud, which appears, at one angle and from one distance, a palace; at another, a temple; at a third, a misshapen monster; and at a fourth, a man. Thus, Hamlet, at one time, and to one observer, seems the bravest and strongest of men; anon, the weakest and most cowardly: at one time, devout and rational; at another, a fierce and profane babbler: now, an ardent lover; and now, a heartless insulter of the woman he had professed to love: now, prompt in action to rashness; and now, slow to indolence and fatuity: now, a counterfeit of madness; and now, really insane: now, the most cunning, and now the most careless, of men: now a rogue, now a fool, now a wise man, and now a heterogeneous compound of all three. Twenty theories have been propounded of him; all have been plausibly based on particular points in his character; and yet no theory hitherto is entirely, or even approximately, complete; each is serviceable chiefly in blowing out the one immediately before itself: and still Hamlet seems, as he stands, shrouded and shifting to every breath, to say to his critics, as he said to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, " You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would *pluck* out the *heart* of my mystery; you would *sound* me from the lowest note to the top of my compass; and there is *much music*, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet *cannot you make it speak*."

We happen at present to have beside us only two of those twenty " soundings," and beg leave to say something of them, ere propounding our own view. The first is that of Dr. Johnson. It comes, as Hamlet would say, " trippingly off the tongue," and is written with more than his usual careless rotundity and lazy elaboration of style. It commences by praising, very

properly, the "variety" of the play. But what does the doctor mean by the "merriment" it excites? Surely it is "very tragical mirth." Even in the laughter of this drama, its heart is sad. Hamlet and a gravedigger are the two jesters! And while the wit of the one is wild, reckless, turbulent, like the glee of the damned, that of the other has a death-rattle in its throat, and, returned to us on the echoes of the grave, produces an unspeakably dreary effect. Dr. Johnson adds, "The pretended madness of Hamlet causes much mirth." This we question. At least us it has always impressed with a feeling of melancholy. Indeed, the lighter parts of the play, consisting more of wit than of humour, excite rather wonder at the sharp turns, lively sallies, and fierce retorts of a stung spirit, than any broad and genial laughter. He says, that "some scenes neither forward nor retard the action." This we may grant; but are not these in fine keeping with the "slow, reluctant" delay of the hero? Shakspere must linger, in sympathy with Hamlet. Nay, this was sometimes, as we have seen, the manner of the poet. An inspired loiterer, he now and then leans over some beautiful stream, or pauses at some fine point of prospect, or strikes into some brief byway of humour, or character, or pathos, even when his day's journey, and the day itself, are both drawing to a close. For why? He was a man, not a railway machine; and, besides, as his soul had its habitual dwelling in summer, *his* days were all long.

He says, that "Hamlet was an instrument rather than an agent," but suggests no reason why Shakspere has made him so. He charges, finally, the play with "a lack of poetical justice and poetical probability. The apparition left the regions of the dead to little purpose. The revenge which he demands is not obtained but by the death of him who is required to take it; and the gratification which would arise from the destruction of a usurper and a murderer is abated by the death of Ophelia, the young and beautiful, the harmless and the pious." But, first, the apparition's object *was* gained—the ghost did not leave the grave in vain—the murderer was detected, and died; and, secondly, Shakspere probably consulted something higher than our "gratification." He sought, probably, the broad moral purpose we have already expressed; and, if questioned as to poetical justice, might have replied in words similar to those of Scott—perhaps the noblest passage, in a moral point of view, in all that writer's works—"A character of a lofty stamp is degraded, rather than exalted, by an attempt to reward

virtue with temporal prosperity. Such is not the recompense which Providence has deemed worthy of suffering merit, and it is a dangerous and fatal doctrine, that rectitude of conduct and of principle are either naturally allied with, or adequately rewarded by, the gratification of our passions, or attainment of our wishes. In a word, if a virtuous and self-denied character is dismissed with temporal wealth, greatness, or rank, the reader will be apt to say, 'Verily, virtue has had its reward.' But a glance at the great picture of life will show that duty is seldom thus remunerated." And what is true of the apportionment of the gifts of Providence is true also of its evils. It were degrading to a lofty character, not only to enrich it with uniform good fortune, but to give it an unnatural insulation from the great and wide ruin which is produced by guilt.

We pass to Goethe's far more celebrated account of *Hamlet*, of which the *Edinburgh Review* declares, that there is "nothing so good in all our own commentators—nothing at once so poetical, so feeling, and so just." After a beautiful picture of Hamlet's original character, and a paraphrase of his story, Goethe says, "to me it is clear that Shakspere meant to represent the effects of a great action laid upon a soul *unfit* for the performance of it." And then follows the well-known and exquisitely-beautiful figure—"An oak-tree is planted in a costly jar, which should have borne only pleasant flowers in its bosom: the roots expand, the jar is shivered. A lovely, pure, noble, and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which forms a hero, sinks beneath a burden which it cannot bear, and must not cast away." This is very fine, but is it true? Does it open the lock of Hamlet's character? Does it account for all, or for the most, of the mysteries connected with it?

Now, we do not find any proofs that Hamlet was peculiarly weak of nerve; nay, we find many proofs to the contrary. Did he not front his father's spirit in arms? Did he not rebuke his mother, and pink old Polonius, mistaking him for his uncle? Did he not bravely confront Laertes, and at last stab the king? These actions and others seem to prove him endowed with the "Nemean lion's nerve;" and, although he more than once charges himself with cowardice, yet this occurs always in passages where he seems to be beating about in search of causes for his conduct, and to be lashing himself, by imaginary arguments, into rage. Nor does Shakspere wish to represent him as peculiarly delicate and tender. He seems rather an oak than a flower-jar, though it be an oak shaken by the wind. No

namby-pamby sentimentalist had he ever been, but a brave, strong man, whose melancholy and exasperation bring forth, in tumultuous profusion, the excessive riches of a prematurely thoughtful and very powerful soul. His is manifestly no weakly elegant and graceful nature unhinged; but a strong, rarely-gifted, and bold spirit, in anguish, uncertainty, aberration, and despair. Though there were no other evidence, the vigour and tact discovered in the trick passed upon Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, in sending them to be executed instead of himself, prove that he was an energetic and not a feeble character. So that, although Goethe has extracted "music" from this strange instrument, he has not "plucked out" the *heart* of its mystery.

Let us now come to state our own impressions, which we do not propound as dogmatically certain, but simply as highly probable.

First, then, we do not think that Shakspere ever intended Hamlet for a thoroughly consistent and regular character, swayed always by intelligible motives, and adjusted, in his actions, either according to fixed principles or to steady currents of passion. He meant to show us a mind of great general powers and warm passions, liable to every species of whim and caprice, and at last, through the force of melancholy and mingling circumstances, partially unhinged—aware, however, of this, and with astuteness enough to turn the *real* aberration into a means for supplying evidence for the existence of the *assumed*. Such a nondescript being, hovering between the worlds of reality and insane dream, Shakspere chose, that he might survey mankind from a new and strange angle, and through a medium which should bring out more forcibly the mysterious contrasts of human life. Hamlet is a being all but loosened from humanity, whom we see bursting tie after tie which had bound him to his kind, and surveying them at last almost from an ideal altitude. He is a "chartered libertine," with method in his madness, and with madness in his method, and who, whether he rushes or pauses on his uncertain path—now with the rush of the cataract above, and now with the pause of the deep pool below—is sure to dash a strong and lawless light upon the subjects or the persons he encounters. He becomes thus a quaint and mighty mask, from behind which Shakspere speaks out sentiments which he could not else have so freely disclosed; and—shall we say?—the great dramatist has used Hamlet as Turpin did Black Bess—he has drenched him with the wine

of demi-derangement, and then accomplished his perilous ride.

Secondly, Hamlet's conduct is entirely what might have been expected from the construction of his mind, and the effect sad circumstances have produced upon him. He is "everything by turns, and nothing long." No deep passion of any kind can root itself in his mind, although a hundred passions pass and repass, and rage and subside within his soul. He well speaks of himself as consisting of divers "parts." His very convictions are not profound. He at first implicitly believes the word of the ghost as to his uncle's guilt, but afterwards his belief falters, and he has to be reassured by the matter of the play. The mask of total madness he snatches up, wears *con amore* for awhile, and then wearies of it, and drops it, and then resumes it again. This, too, explains his conduct to Ophelia. He loves her; but his love, or its expression, yields for a time to the paroxysm of the passions excited by the ghost; it returns, like a demon who had been dismissed, in sevenfold force, and he rushes into her apartment, and goes through antics, partly to sustain his assumed character of madness, but principally as the wild outcome of real love; his passion is again overlaid by the whirling current of events, but breaks out at last, like a furnace, at her grave. So, too, with his desire for vengeance on his father's murderer. It has lighted, not as Goethe has it, on a feeble, but on a flighty nature; the oak is not in a tiny jar, it is planted in a broad field, but a field where there is not much "depth of earth," and where many other trees growing beside draw a portion of that depth away. It is not the want of nerve: he could kill the king, in a momentary impulse, as he killed Polonius, but he cannot form or pursue any strong and steady plan for his destruction; if that plan, at least, required time for its development. Other feelings, too, interfere with its accomplishment. There is at times in his mind a reluctance to the task, as a work of butchery—the butchery of an uncle and a stepfather. Regard for his mother's feelings, and the consequences to result on her, is no stranger to his soul, and serves to cool his ardour and to excuse his delay. The desire of vengeance never, in short, becomes the main and master passion of his mind, and this, simply, because that powerful, but morbid and jangled mind is incapable of a master passion, and of the execution of a fixed purpose. One consistency only is there in Hamlet's character, that of subtle and poetic intellect. This penetrates with its searching light every

nook and corner of the play, follows him through all the windings of his course, unites in some measure the contradictory passions which roll and fluctuate around him, inspirits his language into eloquence, wit, and wisdom, and makes him the *facile princeps* of Shakspere's fools—those illustrious personages who "never say a foolish thing, and never do a wise one." Such a "foremost *fool* of all this world," with brilliant powers, uncertain will, and "scattery" purposes and passions, is Hamlet the Dane, as, at least, he appears to us after much and careful pondering of his character. Throw into the crucible strong intellect, vivid fancy, irregular will, fluctuating courage, impulsive and inconstant feelings, an excitable heart, a melancholy temperament, and add to these the damaging, weakening, yet infuriating influences of a father's murder, a mother's marriage, the visit of a ghost, an unsettled passion for Ophelia, the meddling interference of a weak father-in-law, the spectacle of a disturbed and degraded country, the feeling of his own incapacity for fixed resolve or permanent energy of passion, and from this weird mixture there will come out a Hamlet, in all his strength and weakness, wisdom and folly, energetic commencements and lame and impotent conclusions, insane and aimless fury, and strong, sudden gleams of resolution and valour, vain and sounding bombast, and clear, terse, and inspired eloquence. What weakness he has does not lie so much in any one part of his mind, as in the want of proper management and grasp of his powers as a whole. Partially insane he is, but his insanity is the reverse of a monomania; it arises from the confusion and too rapid succession of moods and feelings, which he cannot consolidate into a whole, or press into one strong, narrow current, running on to his purpose

> As the Pontick sea
> To the Propontick and the Hellespont.

Is it too much to call him a sublime and sententious, an earnest and eloquent fool?

Yet it is clear that Shakspere had a peculiar and profound sympathy with Hamlet. He lingers beside him long. He lavishes all his wealth upon him. He seems to love to look out at mankind through the strange window of those wild eyes. Was this because Hamlet was (as is generally supposed) the child of his mature age, or was it from a certain fellow-feeling? Hamlet is what Shakspere would have been, had he ever been thoroughly soured, and had that magnificent head of his ever begun to reel and totter. Had Shakspere, like Swift,

Johnson, Byron, and Scott, a fear of "dying a top," and has he shot out that awful fear into his impersonation of the Prince of Denmark, and thus relieved and carried it off?

The general moral of the play has been stated above; but there are besides numberless minor morals, as well as separate beauties, scattered in golden sentences throughout, which must be familiar to all. There is the picture of man, in his strange contrarieties of wormhood and godhood—his head of gold, and his feet of miry clay—compacted out of all contradictions; and who—even as the Andes include in their sweep, from the ocean below to the hoary head of Chimborazo above, all climates, seasons, and productions of earth—touches, as *he* ascends, all conditions of being, and runs parallel to all the gradations of the universe. Pascal, Herbert, Young, and Pope, have written in emulous and eloquent antithesis on the same theme; but they all pale before this one expression of Hamlet's (after a matchless enumeration of man's noble qualities)—"this *quintessence* of *dust*." Where in literature such an anticlimax? such a jerking down of proud pretensions; such two worlds of description and satire condensed into two words? This, and many other expressions here, and in other of Shakspere's works, prove what an accusing spirit, what a myriad-armed and tongued misanthrope, he might have been! But a soured Shakspere is a thought difficult to be entertained.

The two famous soliloquies, again, seem "God's canon against self-slaughter" versified. They have, we doubt not, deterred many a rash spirit from suicide. If they do not oppose it upon the highest ground, they do it on one generally intelligible and powerful. The prayer of the guilty king is worth a thousand dull homilies on the subject. It points to the everlasting distinction between a *sinful*, and a *sinner's* prayer. The advice of Polonius to his son is full of practical wisdom; but, owing to the contrast with the frozen stupidity of the man from whom it comes, reminds us of a half-melted and streaming mass of ice. The irony and quaint moral which gild the skull in the graveyard, till it glares and chatters, are in keeping with the wild story and wilder characters, but are not devoid of edifying instruction to those who can surpass the first shudder of disgust. And the character and fate of Ophelia convey, in the most plaintive manner, a still tenderer and more delicate lesson.

Surely Shakspere was the greatest and most humane of all mere moralists. Seeing more clearly than mere man ever saw

into the evils of human nature and the corruptions of society, into the natural weakness and the acquired vice of man, he can yet love, pity, forget his anger, and clothe him in the mellow light of his genius, like the sun, who, in certain days of peculiar balm and beauty, seems to shed his beams, like an amnesty, upon all beings. But we must not forget that Shakspere is no pattern for us—that this very generosity of heart seems, we fear, to have blinded him to the *special* character and adaptations of the Christian scheme—and that we, as Christians, and not mere philanthropists, are bound, while pitying the guilty, to do indignant and incessant battle against that giant Something, for which sin is but a feeble name, which slew our Saviour, and which has all but ruined our race.

I have dwelt so long on *Hamlet*, that I must now hurry to a close.

With regard to Shakspere's critics and commentators, I will not say, with Hazlitt, that "if you would see the greatness of human genius, read Shakspere; if you would see the smallness of human learning, read his commentators." But I will say, that I have learned more of Shakspere from Hazlitt than from any other quarter, except from Shakspere himself.

In preparing these cursory remarks upon Shakspere, I have studiously avoided re-reading any works upon the subject. I may, however, recommend to those who wish to sail out farther upon this great ocean—Johnson's *Preface to Shakspere* (excellent so far as it goes), Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakspere's Plays*, Schlegel's *Lectures on Dramatic Literature*, Mrs. Jameson on Shakspere's Female Characters, and an admirable series which appeared in *Blackwood*, entitled *Shakspere in Germany*.

I close by claiming a high place for this poet among the benefactors of his kind. With august philanthropists, Howard or Wilberforce, we may not class him. Into that seventh heaven of invention, where Milton and Dante dwelt, he came only sometimes, not for want of power, but because his sphere was a wider and larger one—he had business to do in the veins of the earth as well as in the azure depth of air. But if force of genius—sympathy with every form and every feeling of humanity—the heart of a man united to the imagination of a poet, and wielding the Briarean hands of a demigod—if the writing of thirty-two plays which are colouring to this hour the literature of the world—if the diffusion of harmless happiness in immeasurable quantity—if the stimulation of innumerable minds—if the promotion of the spirit of charity and of universal

brotherhood—if these constitute for mortal man titles to the name of benefactor, and to that praise which ceases not with the sun, but expands into immortality, the name and the praise must support the throne which Shakspere has established over the minds of the inhabitants of an earth which may be known in other parts of the universe as "Shakspere's world."

SIR EDWARD LYTTON BULWER[1]

THE attention of the Scottish public has of late been strongly attracted to Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer, through his visit to Edinburgh; and the elegant and scholarly addresses he delivered there. We propose taking the opportunity so lawfully and gracefully furnished by his recent appearances among us, to analyse at some length, and in a critical yet kindly spirit, the leading elements of his literary character and genius.

Bulwer has been now twenty-seven years before the public, and has during that period filled almost every phase of authorship and of life. He has been a critic, an editor, a dramatist, an historian, a politician, a speculator in metaphysics, a poet, a novelist, a member of parliament, a roué, a husband, a divorcée, a winebibber, a subject of the cold water cure, a sceptic, a christian, a philosophical radical, and a moderate conservative. In his youth he worshipped Hazlitt and Shelley,—in his middle age he vibrated between Brougham and Coleridge,—and in his waning manhood he associates with Alison and Aytoun. He has poured out books in all manners, on all subjects, and in all styles; and his profusion might have seemed that of a spendthrift, if it had not been for the stores in the distance which even his scatterings by the wayside revealed. For versatility of genius, variety of intellectual experience, and the brilliant popularity which has followed him in all his diversified career, he reminds us rather of Goethe or Voltaire, than of any living author. Like them he has worshipped the god Proteus, and so devoutly and diversely worshipped him that he might almost, at times, be confounded with the object of his adoration.

We think decidedly, however, that this boundless fertility and elasticity have tended to lessen the general idea of Bulwer's powers, and to cast an air of tentative experiment and rash adventure over many of his works. Had he concentrated himself upon some grand topic,—his fame had now been equally wide, not less brilliant, and much more solid than it is;—had he taken some one lofty Acropolis by storm, and shown the flag of

[1] The Novels and Romances of Sir E. B. Lytton, Bart. London: Chapman and Hall. From the *Scottish Review*, April 1854.

his genius floating on its summit, instead of investing a hundred at once, he had been—and been counted—a greater general. We would willingly have accepted two or three superb novels, one large conclusive history, along with a single work of systematic and profound criticism, in exchange for all that motley and unequal, although most varied and imposing mass of fiction, history, plays, poems, and politics, which forms the collected works of Sir E. Lytton Bulwer.

Some of Sir Edward's admirers have ventured to compare him to Shakspere and to Scott. Such comparisons are not just. Than Shakspere he owes a great deal less to nature, and a great deal more to culture, as well as to that indomitable perseverance to which he has lately ascribed so much of his success, so that we may indeed call the one the least, and the other the most cultivated of great authors; and to Scott, he is vastly inferior in that simple power, directness of aim, natural dignity, manly spirit, fire and health, which rank him immediately below Homer. We may here remark that, notwithstanding all that has been said and sung about the genius of Scott, we are convinced that justice has never been done to one feature of his novels—we mean their excellence as specimens of English style. Except in Burke and De Quincey, whose mode of thinking is so very different, we know of no passages in English prose, which approach the better parts of the Waverley series in the union of elegance and strength, in manly force, natural grace, and noble rhythmical cadence. Would that any word of ours could recall the numerous admirers of the morbid magnificence, and barbarous dissonance of Carlyle's style; of the curt affected jargon which mars the poetic beauty of Emerson's; of the loose fantastic verbiage in which Dickens chooses to indite most of his serious passages; and of the laboured antithesis, uneasy brilliance and assumed carelessness of Macaulay; and induce them to take up again the neglected pages of the Titan Burke, with all the wondrous treasures of wisdom, knowledge, imagery, and language they contain, and to read night and day Scott's novels—not for their story, or their pictures of national manners —but for the sake of the wells of English undefiled; the specimens of picturesque, simple, rich, and powerful writing, which they so abundantly contain.

Bulwer, too, although even in his most favoured hours he cannot write like Scott, is distinguished by the merit of his style. It has more point, if not so much simplicity; if possessing less strength, it has far more brilliance; and it has, moreover, a cer-

tain classical charm—a certain Attic elegance—a certain tinge of the antique—which few writers of the age can rival. If D'Israeli's mode of writing remind you of the gorgeous dress of Jewish females, with their tiaras shining on the brow, their diamond necklaces gleaming above the breast, the vivid yellow or deep red of their garments, their broidered hair, and pearls, and costly array, Bulwer's, in his happier vein, reminds you of the attire of the Grecian women, shod with sandals, clothed with the simple, yet elegant tunic, and bearing each on her head a light and tremulous urn.

Passing from his style, we have some remarks to make on the following points connected with him,—the alleged non-poetical nature of his mind, his originality, the impersonal faculty he possesses to such a degree, his remarkable width of mind, his dramatic power, the fact that with all his frequent flippancy, levity, and excess of point, he is equal to all the great crises of his narrative; and finally to that power or principle of *growth* which has been so conspicuous in his literary history.

First not a few have maintained that Bulwer, with all his brilliant effect and eloquence, is not properly speaking a poet. An eloquent detractor of his has said—"The author is an orator, and has tried to be a poet. Dickens' John the Carrier was perpetually on the verge of a joke, but never made one: Bulwer's relation to poetry is of the same provoking kind. The lips twitch; the face glows; the eyes light; but the joke is not there. An exquisite *savoir faire* has led him within sight of the intuitions of poetic instinct. Laborious calculation has almost stood for sight, but his maps and charts are not the earth and the heavens. His vision is not a dream, but a night-mare; you have Parnassus before you, but the light that never was on sea or shore is wanting. The whole reminds you of a lunar landscape, rocks and caves to spare, but *no atmosphere*. It is fairy-land travelled by dark. How you sigh even for the chaos, the *discordia semina* of genius, while toiling through the impotent waste of this sterile maturity."

This is vivid and vigorous, but hardly just. We need meet it only by pronouncing one magic word—"Zanoni." Who that ever read that glorious romance, with its pictures of love and life and death, and the mysteries of the unseen world; the fine dance of the human, and the preternatural elements which are in it, and keep time so admirably to the music of the genius which has created both, and the melting sublimity of its close—will deny the author the name of poet? Or, who that has ever read

those allegories and little tales, which are sprinkled through *The Student* and the *Pilgrims of the Rhine*, can fail to see in them the creative element? Or, take the end of his Harold, the death of Rienzi, the *Hell* scene in *Night and Morning*, and the closing chapters of the *Last Days of Pompeii*—the terms "oratory" or "art" will not measure these: they are instinct with power: their words are the mighty rushing wings of a supernal tempest; and to us, at least, they always, even at the twentieth perusal, give that deep delightful shiver, that thrill of awful joy, which proclaims that the Spirit of Genius is passing by, and is making every hair on our flesh start up to do him obeisance.

True genius is, and must be, original; so that the terms "original genius" are a poor pleonasm. Now, we think that Bulwer can be proved to have originality; and originality in any department of the fine arts is genius. His thought, his imagery, his style, his form of fiction, are all intensely his own; and, *therefore*, since exerted on ideal subjects, are all those of a poet. He began his career indeed, as most writers do, with imitation. He found certain models in vogue at the time, besides some, which, although not generally popular, were recommended to him by his own taste. Hence in his early novels, he has now Godwin, now Scott, and now the authors of what were then called the fashionable novels, such as Tremaine and Almacks, in his eye. But he soon soared out of these trammels, and exhibited, and began to realise, his own ideal of fiction, the peculiarity of which perhaps lies in the extreme *breadth* of the purpose he seeks through the novel and romance to fulfil. He has tried to make it a cosmopolitan thing,—a mirror—not of low or high life exclusively, not of the everyday or the ideal alone, not of the past, or present, or future, merely; but of each and all;—each set in its proper proportions, and all shown in a brilliant light. Ward, and the whole of that school, including D'Israeli in his *Vivian Grey* and *Young Duke*, wrote for the fashionable classes. Godwin wrote for political and moral philosophers. Dickens writes for Londoners, Lever for Irishmen, and Thackeray for the microscopic students of human nature everywhere. Even Scott neither expressed the spirit of his own age, nor ever attempted to reproduce the classical periods; nor has he discovered any sympathy with the mighty metaphysical, moral, and religious problems with which all thinkers are now compelled to grapple. But Bulwer has written *of* the world, and *for* the world, in the broadest sense; has

described society, from the glittering crown of its head, to the servile sole of its foot; has painted all kinds of life, the high, the middle, the mean, the town and the country, the convulsive and the calm,—that of noblemen, of gamesters, of students, of highwaymen, of murderers, and of milliners; has mated with the men and manners of all ages; has reproduced with startling vraisemblance the ancient Roman times, and breathed life into the gigantic skeletons of Herculaneum and Pompeii; has coped with many of the social and moral questions, as well as faithfully reflected the salient features of our own wondrous motherage; and has with bold foot invaded those regions of speculation, which blend with the shadows and splendours of the life to come. It is this wide and catholic character, which makes his writings so popular on the Continent. We do not, indeed, say that he has completely filled up the broad outline of his purpose; otherwise he had been the greatest novelist, perhaps also the greatest writer, in the world. But he has succeeded so far as to induce us to class him with the first authors of his time. He *has*, although, with much effort, long training and over consciousness both of the toil and the triumph, fairly lifted himself above this "ignorant present time," and caught on his wings the wide calm light of the universe. Yet, with all this Goethe-like breadth, he has none of his icy indifference; but is one of the most fervid and glowing, as well as clear and cosmopolitan, of modern writers.

His depth has often been denied, nor are we careful to maintain it. There are in some of our authors, certain quiet subtle touches, certain profound "asides," certain piercing single thoughts, which proclaim a native vein, communicating directly with the great Heart of Being; but which we seldom, if ever, find in Bulwer. Although he be in our judgment a true poet, he is not a poet of the very highest order. But, perhaps, his exceeding width may be taken as in some measure a compensation for his deficiency in depth. Indeed some may even contend that if there be the same *amount* of *mind*, it is of little consequence whether it be diffused over a hundred intellectual regions, or gathered together in one or two profound pits; that as depth and height are only relative terms, so it is with width and depth; and that as you call the sky indifferently either lofty or profound, so a very wide man is deep in one way and direction, and a very deep man is wide in another. Be this as it may, and there seems a proportion of truth as well as of fallacy in it, we contend that the writer who, like Bulwer, has traversed

such varied regions, found and filled, or made and inspired so many characters, imbibed the spirit, talked the language, and reproduced the soul of so many times,—must be a great man, whether we call him or not a *great* poet.

One element of poetic power he unquestionably has: he is impersonal; and, on the whole, very little of an egotist. In *Pelham*, indeed, and one or two more of his earlier novels, while he was yet trifling with his pen, and had not taken any full or calm aim at his object, he seemed often to be glancing obliquely at his own image in the mirror of self-conceit, partly from a wish to reassure his confidence in himself, and partly from that spirit of indolent vacancy which often falls upon a writer, who is only half-hearted in his task; and who must stir himself to renewed action by the spur of vanity. But latterly, he has risen to a higher region, and has contrived while "shooting his soul" into a thousand personages, fictitious or real, high and low, wicked and good, commonplace and romantic, to forget his own elegant and *recherché* person—his own fastidious habits and tastes, his own aristocratic birth and training; and to remember nothing save the subject or idea which has entered, filled, and transfigured him. For example, Eugene Aram, though a monster, is not a mere distorted shadow of the author; Rienzi is not Bulwer, nor is Walter Montreal, nor is Harold the last of the Saxon kings, nor is Warwick the king-maker. These, and many of his other heroes, are not projections of the writer's image; but are either bold individual creations, or sternly true to the truth of history. Wordsworth has accused even Goethe of multiplying his own image under Protean disguises; and of being an egotist under the semblance of an absolute and colourless catholicity; and on this account most justly ranks him beneath Shakspere, who can become and is delighted to become everybody except himself. Bulwer, on the contrary, has often approached the Shaksperean method, with this difference, that while the novelist passes from soul to soul with labour dire and weary woe, and, like the magician in the story of Fadlallah, has to die in agony out of his own idiosyncracy, ere he is born in joy and exultation into that of others, Shakspere melts into the being of all other men as softly as snow into a river, and as easily as one dream slides within and becomes a part and portion in another or another series of dreams. But the power in the novelist, as well as in the world-poet *is* magical, and of itself suffices to prove him a writer of genius.

His dramatic quality is in fact only a form or *alias* of his great

width and the impersonal habit of his mind, and need not be dilated on. We prefer to say something about the power he has of rising to the level of most of the great critical points in the stories which he narrates. It is, we grant again, often by effort, by a sweat like that of Sisyphus, that he gets his big stone to the top of the hill, but once there, it remains a triumphal mark—a far-seen trophy of perseverance and power. We grant him, in his general style, too uniformly lively and brilliant. He is like those writers of whose works it has been said "the whole is not always a poem, while every sentence is poetry." He is at times so brilliant that you weary for a single plain sober passage, and would "dig for dulness as for hid treasure." But, first, this is complimentary to his powers, few are so Australian in their intellectual wealth; and, were, secondly, the charge pressed, Bulwer might reply as a student is said once to have done—"Your papers are all equally excellent," said his professor. "Then," replied he, "I'll take care that in my next some parts shall be *divine*." And thus sometimes our author does answer in this matter. He approaches great and noble topics, each one like the brethren of Jerubbaal "resembling the son of a king;" he girds up his loins to mate with their majesty; he effects his purpose; and what Hazlitt says of Milton becomes *nearly* true of him; "He is always striving to say the finest things in the world, and he does say them." Effort, when united with weakness, and ending in the fate of the frog in the fable, is a pitiable spectacle; but not so that effort which is prompted by manly ambition, which is sustained by genuine and growing strength, and which, when it has gained the success it deserves, appears only less wonderful and less sublime than that perfect ease of nature with which another very rare class of writers work their still mightier works. We have specified already a few of those superb passages by which Bulwer has made out his claim to be the Milton, while Scott is the Shakespere, of novelists. Even Scott has seldom surpassed the death of Walter Montreal, or the picture of Vesuvius drunk with devouring fire, and staggering in his terrible vomit.

What is Genius?—is a question to which many answers have been returned. It is, says De Quincey, "mind steeped and saturated in the genial nature." It is, say others, "impassioned truth—thought become phosphorescent!" It is, say others, "original imagination united with constructive power." Without discussing these definitions we are tempted to propound one of our own,—*Genius is Growth.* A man of genius is simply a

man of limitless growth, with a soul smitten with a passion for growth, and open to every influence which promotes it—one who grows always like a tree, by day and by night, in calm and in storm, through opposition and through applause, in difficulty and in despair,—nay, on the chill deathbed itself the soul of the man of genius continues to grow, and never more rapidly than there, when he sometimes says with the dying Schiller, "Many things are becoming plain and clear to me." It is this which, perhaps, proves best his greatness and his relation to the Infinite. The man of talent grows to a certain point and there stops: Genius knows of no stops, and no periods. Even the wings of eagles "knitting," though they do, the mountain with the sky, have their severe limit fixed in the far ether; but the wings of angels have none. Emerson speaks of nature as saying, in answer to all doubts and difficulties, "I grow, I grow." So there hums through the being of a true poet, the low everlasting melody (truer than that fabled of nature, since the growth of matter is only temporary while that of mind is eternal) "I also grow, and shall grow for ever." This growth may sometimes seem to retrograde, just as there are, it is said, certain plants which grow downwards, but downwards in *search of light;* and so the poet-soul, when it stoops, is only stooping to see, and when it turns is only turning to conquer. This growth may sometimes be lost sight of amid the darkness of neglect, or covered up in the night of calamity, or buried in foliage produced by its own vigour; but even as fairies were said to hear the flowers growing, there are ears of fairy fineness, which never cease to be aware of the musical growth of men of the true and sovereign seed, springing up like flowers to everlasting life—arising in harmony and in incense toward the heavens of God.

Yes! For this growth is often, if not always, holy and celestial as well as poetical and harmonious. The man who really grows, grows in wisdom, love, and purity, as well as in genius and artistic excellence. It is as a whole that he grows, it is in God and toward God that his being develops itself. Not a few gifted persons, indeed, have been arrested in their career by early death or by dissipation, and appear now in stunted or blasted forms along the horizon of history. But it is a remarkable fact that most men of genius who have been permitted to outlive the dangerous period of the passions, and to attain the majestic noon of middle life or the still evening of old age, have become either pious, or at least moral mild-tempered, and exemplary men. We need only name Young, Johnson, Southey,

Coleridge, Goethe, even Moore in some measure, Shelley (who became old, serious in spirit and well regulated in life at an age when many are only beginning to sow their wild oats), and, so far as we can ascertain, Shakspere himself in proof of this. Time which so often freezes and contracts men of more prosaic mould into a shrivelled selfishness, which seems chiller than death itself, in the case of those whose minds had originally burned like a furnace, only modifies the flame, mingles with it the salt of common sense, if not the frankincense of piety, and renders it more kindly in its outgoings to men, if it does not turn it upward in tongues of sacrifice and worship to the great Fountain of Light, and Father of Spirits. And when piety mingles with the maturity of genius in any gifted soul, it becomes a sight more beautiful than any that this fair creation can show us. The man, then, instead of standing with the mere moralist, and the mere cold speculator, on the outside of things, becomes a "partaker of the Divine nature,"—does not with others discern with lack lustre eye merely the fiery fences and outward semblances of the Infinite, but sees and swims and grows *in* that holy and boundless element itself.

That Bulwer has as yet attained the consummation so devoutly to be wished, which our last sentence describes, we dare not affirm. But certainly he has grown, and his growth has been of a total and vital sort. His first two or three works were distinguished chiefly by sentimentalism and cleverness—a sentimentalism scarcely amounting to genius, and a cleverness hardly attaining to wit. In *Eugene Aram* he displayed a morbid and melodramatic earnestness, strongly characteristic of that uneasy and thick-sighted mood of mind, which was his at the time, and which he was increasing by the study of the French "school of Desperation." In the *Last Days of Pompeii* and *Rienzi*, you saw him throwing out his mind upon subjects which carried him as far as possible away from his own unsatisfied reason, torturing doubts, and agitating passions. Then, in *Zanoni*, the strong spirit was heard beating against the bars of its misery—and its life; and asking in its despair awful and unanswered questions at Destiny and the World unseen. Then, in his *Ernest Maltravers*, his *Alice*, and his *New Timon*, he seemed backing out of spiritual speculations into a certain sneering voluptuousness worthy of Wieland, of Byron, or of Voltaire. And lastly, in his *Caxtons* and *My Novel*, there seems to have risen on his path, what the Germans would call an "aftershine" of Christianity—a mild, belated, but divine-

seeming day, in which he is walking on still, and which he doubtless deeply regrets had not sooner gleamed over his chequered way. His allusions to the experiences of Robert Hall, and to the benignant influence of the Christian faith in soothing the woes of humanity, which abound in the *Caxtons* especially, are exceedingly beautiful, and have opened to Bulwer's genius the doors of many a heart that were obstinately shut against him before. The moral tone of these latter novels, too, is much sweeter, healthier, and purer than that of his earlier tales. Their artistic execution is not only equal, but we think in many respects superior. If there is in them less artifice, there is more real art; and if they have less of the glare and bustle of rhetoric, they have more of the soul of poetry. If they dazzle and astonish less, they are infinitely more pleasing, and if they abound not in rapid adventures, thrilling situations, and romantic interest, they idealise common life, and show poetic beauty as well as the soul of goodness, which are found amongst the middle classes of society. One character in his last novel is perhaps the finest of all his creations, —we mean, of course, Burley. In the very daring implied in taking up the *name* of the most original character Scott ever drew, old John Balfour, the stern homicide of Magus Muir, and connecting it with the most novel and striking character Bulwer ever depicted, there was genius. Who would venture even to *call* the hero of a new play Macbeth, or Lear, or Hamlet? Unless the play were of transcendent merit, the very name so presumptuously assumed, would condemn it as assuredly as John Galt's *Lady Macbeth* was condemned. But in spite of this preliminary prejudice, Bulwer's Burley is not only as entirely different from Scott's, as a rough literary man of the nineteneth century must be from a rough soldier of the seventeenth; but as a picture of a strange, wild, half-mad man of genius, full, nevertheless, of the milk of human kindness, and of the warmest and noblest feelings, it is almost perfect, and of itself sufficient to immortalise the author.

In contemplating Bulwer's career we are impressed, in fine, with one or two reflections of a somewhat interesting and important kind. It teaches us the might and worth which lie in determined struggle and invincible perseverance. We do not by any means dislike those splendid *coup de mains* of literary triumph we find in such cases as Byron, Macaulay, Charles Dickens, and Alexander Smith, all of whom "arose one morning and found themselves famous." Nay, we glory in

them as proofs of the power of the human mind, and as auguries of the more illustrious successes reserved for yet brighter and purer spirits in the future. They show what man can do, and hint what man yet *may* do. But we love still better to see a strong Titan, slowly urging his way against opposition, often driven back but never discouraged, often perplexed but never in despair, often cast down but never destroyed, often falling but never fallen, and at last gaining a victory as undeniable as that of a jubilant summer sun. Such was Milton, such Johnson, such Burke, such Wordsworth, such D'Israeli, and such Bulwer. The success of these men looks less like the result of accident, or of popular caprice, or of magic, and more like the just and lawful although late reward of that high merit which unites moral energy with intellectual prowess, and becomes thus far more useful as an example and a stimulus to others. Not one in a hundred millions can expect such a tropical sunrise of success as befell Byron; but any one who unites a considerable degree of capacity with indomitable determination, may become if not a Bulwer, yet in his own department an eminent and influential man.

We are still more struck with this perseverance, when we remember Bulwer's position in society. Possessed of rank and ample fortune, he has laboured as hard as any bookseller's hack in the empire; proving thus that his love for literature was as sincere as his ideal of it was high, and redeeming it from a certain shade of contempt which has of late, justly or unjustly, rested upon it. It cannot be denied that various causes, such as the poverty of many of our authors, and the mean shifts to which it has often reduced them; the dissipation and black-guardism of a few others; the envious spirit and quarrelsome disposition of a third class; the vast amount of mediocre writing which now pours from the press; the number of pretenders whom the hot and sudden sunlight of advancing knowledge has prematurely quickened into reptile life; not to speak of the engrossment of the public mind with commercial speculation and politics, and the contemptuous indifference of many of our aristocracy and many of our clergy to literary things and literary men, have all combined rather to lower Polite Letters in the eyes of the public. And nothing, on the other hand, can tend, or has tended more to reinstate it in its proper place of estimation than the fact, that not a few, distinguished and successful in other professions, in arts or in arms, at the bar or in the pulpit, have gloried in casting in their lot with this

despised profession,—have submitted to its drudgeries, borne its burdens, and aimed at and gained its laurels. Eminent sheriffs have become historians. Eminent officers have become writers of travels. Eminent clergymen have become editors of periodicals and authors of scientific treatises. Eminent physicians, men of fashion, barristers, lords of session, and even peers of the realm, have all aspired to the honour connected with the name of poet. And Bulwer has brought this to a bright climax, by blending the lustre of rank and riches with the distinctions of the highest literary celebrity. We fear that literature, as a profession, will never thrive to any great extent in this country. The gains of authors are becoming smaller and smaller in each section of the century; and the fact that all our literature threatens soon to be afloat in the great gulf-stream of cheapness, will probably, *we* at least think, reduce them farther still. In this case we must depend more than ever upon the supplies from non-professional men, non-commissioned officers, shall we call them? in the great literary army. Nor need we fear that this will at all deteriorate the value of literary productions. It will have, we think, precisely the opposite effect. Professional litterateurs are often forced by necessity to put to press productions totally unworthy of their talents, and in general to dilute and weaken by diffusion their powers. It is obvious that those who write only when leisure permits, and the spur of impulse excites, are less liable to this temptation. And looking both to the past and present, we find that the greatest and best, on the whole, of our writers have not been authors by profession. Shakspere's profession was not authorship, but the stage. Milton was a schoolmaster and a secretary. Addison, too, was a secretary of state. Pope was a man of private fortune. Fielding was a justice. Richardson kept a shop,—so did Godwin. Cowper lived on his patrimony and on gifts from his relatives. Wordsworth was a stampmaster. Croly is a rector. John Wilson was a professor. Shelley was a gentleman of fortune and heir to a baronetcy. Byron was a peer. Carlyle has an estate. Browning is a man of fortune and family. Of Jeffrey, Macaulay, Sidney Smith, Hall, and Foster, we need not speak. And our present hero is the proprietor of Knebworth, as well as a scholar, orator, wit, novelist, and poet.

We close this paper by expressing our very hearty congratulations to Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer on his recent reception and appearances in Edinburgh; our warm gratitude for the hours of pleasure and profit his numerous works have given us;

and an ardent wish that the evening of his life, now approaching, may be calm and bright; and that the current of thought and feeling, in his future works may take, still more decidedly than of late, a practical and a Christian course; and catch on its last waves the hues of heaven's light, blended with the tints of fancy and of poetry!

SATIRE AND SATIRISTS[1]

It has sometimes been questioned whether satire belongs to the region of poetry. To settle this question would require us to enter more at large into the nature of poetry than our space at present permits. If we limit poetry to the ideal, the imaginative and the pure, then much satire, it is obvious, must be excluded from its province; ordinary satire seldom approaches any ideal except that of ugliness—its pictures are generally those of the disgusting and the foul, sometimes edged into interest by a touch of imagination. But if we look simply to power and the possibility of producing great effects on the human mind, then satire must be admitted to belong to a secondary but decided order of the poetic. And, whenever satire over-soars the petty and the personal and rises into the region of moral indignation, or into broad general accusations, not of men but of man, it is, as it were, transfigured into poetry. The satirist voluntarily, indeed, assumes the ape-form, and ape-attitudes; he sets himself to sneer and flout at, and pelt humanity, but he will sometimes feel surprised and elevated by the power of righteous wrath into a genuine man and poet.

Satire had its origin in Rome. Among the Greeks, indeed, as in all nations, its elements existed; but they were scattered throughout comedies, fables, and burlesque epics; they were not concentrated into any distinct and separate mode of composition. In the poetry of the Hebrews we find some touches of the satirical superior to anything in literature, reminding you of the light and sportful strokes of the lightning, withering and blasting all it meets, with such freedom from malice, and such sovereign ease—of this sort are the address of Elijah on Carmel to the prophets of Baal, the pictures by Solomon of the sluggard, the drunkard, the simple youth deceived by the strange woman, and many passages in the Prophets, such as Isaiah's description of the construction of an idol. But the Hebrew writers are too high wrought in their imaginations, and too stern and earnest in their feelings, to indulge much in a satiric vein; their satire is perpetually darkening into dread invective, or springing

[1] From the *Scottish Review*, January 1856.

upwards into sublime poetry. It was reserved for the more artificial genius of the Romans to create satire as a didactic art.

Indeed, satire, regarded as a separate form of composition, presupposes an age somewhat late, in which refinement is beginning to sink into the arms of luxury. It is in such an age that it finds most appropriate and abundant food, furnished by absurdities of character, or peculiarities of manners as well as by moral delinquences. The customs of the Hebrews and of all primitive nations were too uniform for the purposes of the satirist. The sight of a single bearded Israelite used to provoke laughter among us; but the whole nation which crossed the Red Sea, and which trembled before a trembling Sinai, wore beards, and thus escaped the possibility of derision. The general polish and exquisite grace of the Grecian manners left less room for those eccentricities and *outré* oddities on which the satirist is so prone to fasten, and even their vices wore a garb so graceful that it was difficult to turn them into ridicule. But in Rome there were less refinement and equal pollution; a larger metropolis, too, attracted a greater variety of characters; the Roman mind itself, being of a saturnine cast, inclined more to keen satire than to light comic raillery; and in the "hooked nose," common to the race, lay, as it were, a natural adaptation for, and a silent prophecy of, this species of composition. It is, perhaps, only in such ages as when it flourished in Rome that satire *can* fulfil its mission in the moral history of mankind. *That* is, to show vice its own image—to scourge impudent imposture — to expose hypocrisy — to laugh down solemn quackery of every kind—to create blushes on brazen brows, and fears of scorn in hollow hearts—to make iniquity, as ashamed, hide its face—to apply caustic, nay, cautery, to the wounds of society, and to destroy sin by showing both the ridicule which attaches to its progress, and the wretched consequences which are its end. But ere this purpose (a purpose, we grant, which the satirist has too seldom faithfully fulfilled) can be accomplished, society must be in a degenerate and unnatural condition; ere satire can apply the torch, the vices and absurdities of mankind must have reared the pile.

The first regular satirist in Rome was Caius Ennius Lucilius, a Roman knight, grand-uncle of Pompey the Great, and an intimate friend of Scipio Africanus, under whom he served in the siege of Numantia. He was born at Suessa in 149, B.C., and died at Naples in 103, B.C. He wrote thirty satires, which were very popular in their day, although only a few fragments

of them have been preserved. He improved greatly on the rough models of Ennius and Pacavius, and, as a satirist, he gave the first specimen of that species of verse which was afterwards brought to perfection by Horace, Persius, and Juvenal. Horace has compared Lucilius to a river which carries along precious gold dust with mere rubbish, and his fourth and tenth satires are filled with depreciatory, but probably just, criticism on that satirist, whom he describes dictating his verses, "standing on one foot," who, according to him, exhibits not even "shreds of a poet," and whose lines he asserts to run "with staggering step." Horace seems to have been suspected of jealousy of Lucilius, and was at some pains to substantiate his critical objections.

Horace's own merits as a satirist are of a high order. His versification is the hexameter, and he uses it with a grace and an ease which, considering its somewhat unwieldy and monotonous structure, are wonderful. It is interesting to compare the sounding and lofty measures of Virgil with the slipshod, yet elegant, lines of Horace. You can hardly believe that they use the same rhythm or the same language. Horace was distinguished by his versatility. He was a poet, a critic, a voluptuary, a man of the world. His poetry is found inspiring his Odes or Carmina. His critical acumen is discovered in his *De Arte Poetica*, which is one mass of brilliant æsthetic aphorisms. His voluptuousness colours slightly all his writings; but is most apparent in his *Epistolæ*. His tact and knowledge of life are chiefly displayed in his *Satyræ*. In these there is very little indeed of that fine chastened fire which breathes in his odes, and which has rendered some of them, with perhaps the exception of a few of Schiller's and Campbell's, the most delicately finished and the most classically bold lyrics in the world. Nor do we find in them any of that deep earnest and solemn spirit which burns in the highest species of satire. Horace sits in the full view of vice and crime, leaning on his left elbow, with a slight sneer blended with a quiet smile on his lips, and with the forefinger of his right hand pointing them out to ridicule—he never leaps up indignantly to stop, or to protest against their commission. He finds in folly a more congenial theme for his satirical muse than in vice; and even it he rather touches lightly with the lash, than scourges to shreds. He rather supplies *reasons* for at once laughing at and loathing what is wrong, than makes you loathe or laugh at it. He is too sensible, too easy-minded; his own vice has never transcended a languid self-

indulgent and epicurean habit; he is not a good hater and seems to think it scarcely worth while to be greatly angry, and inconsistent with his decorum and his personal comfort to laugh aloud. Hence a subdued tone in all his satires, and he seems always to be fondling the objects of his derisive mirth. Hence he seldom makes us very merry, and even the effect of that inimitable picture of a bore in the ninth satire of the first book, is to create only on the cheek of his reader a calm, complacent smile.

Persius was born A.D. 34, at Volterra, in Etruria, and died in 62, aged twenty-eight. He was of the equestrian rank, mingled familiarly with the first men of the day, and was much esteemed and loved for his pure and amiable manners. He had studied under the Stoics; and one of his early teachers, named Cornutus, published his six satires after the author's death. In morality, these are sufficiently strict and stern; but their style is abrupt and obscure. His points are almost all sheathed through the remoteness of his allusions and the perplexity of his diction. Hazlitt says, that Bentham might have wrapt up high treason in one of his enormous periods, and it never would have found its way into Westminster Hall. So Persius seems to be very furious, very bitter, and very personal, but few of his hits tell. He is like a man swearing at an Englishman in Hindoostanee, —it is pointless fury, boltless thunder. You *should* be, but are not injured. This, of course, is fatal to the effect of his satires. It is not, but it seems to be, weakness, and a weak satirist is the most helpless of beings. Persius indulges, too, in frequent interrogations, a custom which, unless exceedingly well managed, gives an air of uneasiness, and furious feebleness to writing, and disturbs our attention by a kind of irregular, starting, jolting motion. A question of contempt asked in the ear of a fallen foe is often very powerful in its withering effect, but the foe should first be fallen. Persius omits to fell his opponent before he assails him with what must be impotent scorn. In his satires, altogether, you see more of the willingness to wound, than of the power to strike.

It is very much otherwise with Decius Junius Juvenal. This most powerful of all satirists, flourished in the age of Rome's deepest degeneracy, and under the reign of that terrible succession of tyrants, who appeared like the monsters of geology—the megatherium, mammoth, mastodon—each more hideous and ferocious than his fellow—Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, Domitian; and he seemed created for the very purpose of extracting, from

that heaven-abandoned period, the materials of his impassioned and indignant song. He had been banished by Domitian, under pretence of an appointment, to the extremity of Egypt, and there his vemon had time to "swelter," like that of the toad, under the pressure of the "cold stone,"—nor did he return to Rome till the reign of Trajan, when he was eighty-one years of age. One wonders how, with such fierce passions and chagrins burning in his breast, he contrived to live so long. There are few constitutions that can, like Mithridates, thrive on poisons. But to do Juvenal justice, there were better things in him than mere vindictive venom. His disgust at the follies and vices of his country is so often and so eloquently and so earnestly expressed, as to leave a profound impression of his sincerity. He reminds us not unfrequently of the stern Ezekiel. Like him, he smites with his hand, and tears his hair, and stamps with his foot, in his indignation at the evils which are around him. Like him, too, in his exposure of these evils, he becomes so literal and photographic, as to border on the repulsive,—his pictures of sin show it in all its grossness; and he makes it rather loathsome than ridiculous. That terrible Hebrew—the incarnation of Divine wrath, exclaims (Ezekiel xxii. 30), "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none." Juvenal, in his thirteenth satire, says:—

> Rari quippe boni; numerus vix est totidem quot
> Thebarum portæ vel divitis ostia Nili.

How exquisitely satirical this sudden coming down from the supposed number of a hundred good men like the hundred gates of Thebes, who might possibly be found in the city, to that of seven, like the seven mouths of the Nile! Juvenal is remarkable for the concentration of his style, and for his *exhaustive* genius. He has the memory as well as the *animus* of an accusing angel. No folly, and no vice of high or low, rich or poor, is omitted in his canvas. Perjury, simony, drunkenness, bribery, luxury, foppery, fornication, adultery, unnatural crimes and their consequences, religious hypocrisy, legalised murder and misgovernment, are all represented by this dreadfully impartial artist. His satires in this point, as well as in coarse and literal accuracy, resemble the pictures of Hogarth,—they are daguerreotypes of every smallest, disgusting, and abominable feature in their subjects; and, hence, many have shrunk away from, instead of being attracted by, them.

In later days have appeared such distinguished satirists

as, among the Italians, Ariosto, Salvator Rosa, Gasparo Gozzi, and Alfieri,—among the Spaniards, Cervantes, Saavedra and Quevedo,—among the French, Regnier, Boileau, Voltaire and Berenger,—among the Germans, Falk, Haller, Wieland, Schiller, Goethe, Heyne, etc. We propose, however, confining the rest of this paper to a few remarks on some of the leading British masters of this art.

Donne's and Hall's satires are both now obsolete, although there is infinite ingenuity in the former, and although the latter were of material use to Pope in the construction of his verse. Donne was as great in prose as in poetry. De Quincey says of him, "Few writers have shown a more extraordinary compass of powers than Donne; for he combined what no other man has ever done,—the last sublimation of dialectical subtlety and address, with the most impassioned majesty. Massive diamonds compose the very substance of his poem on the Metempsychosis —thoughts and descriptions which have the fervent and gloomy sublimity of Ezekiel or Æschylus, whilst a diamond dust of rhetorical brilliances is strewed over the whole of his occasional verses and his prose."

Rochester may be signalised as the first thoroughly depraved and vicious person—so far as we remember—who assumed the office of the satirist; the first, although not, alas! the last, human imitator of "Satan accusing Sin." Some satirists before him had been faulty characters, while rather inconsistently assailing the faults of others; but here, for the first time, was a man with no virtue, or belief in virtue whatever, and whose life was one mass of wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores, a naked satyr who gloried in his shame, becoming a severe castigator of public morals and of private character. Even that low and lewd age shrank from the gross anomaly implied in this; and ours has shovelled the memory of the satires, clever as they were, along with that of the life of the man (his death, as told by Burnet, still continues to edify) out of sight for ever.

Samuel Butler had his errors too; but these were principally owing to his age; and the vices which he chiefly satirised were certainly not *his*. He was no hypocrite, no pedant, no sciolist, no pretender to anything which he did not possess. As a satirist, he had unbounded learning to furnish him with grotesque illustrations—a keen sense of the ridiculous—wit unequalled in its abundance and point—a vast assortment of ludicrous fancies and language—and a form of versification which seemed shaped by the very genius of satire for his own purposes, and which

resembles heroic rhyme broken off in the middle with shouts of laughter. He wanted, however, one or two elements found in satirists generally. He had little malignity, and he had no high moral indignation. He seems scarcely to hate, although he despises the Puritans. When seeking to make them ridiculous, he succeeds; but when he tries towards the end of *Hudibras* to make them loathsome, he fails, and this because he does not sufficiently loathe them himself. Nor was there anything in the conduct of that party which could justify lofty moral indignation; and besides, we doubt if Butler possessed sufficient imagination or heart to enkindle in him such a feeling. He was a giant of intellect, learning, and wit; but he was as cold as he was colossal, comparable to his own "Elephant in the moon," —an object prodigiously large, but surrounded by a pale and chilly atmosphere: he was enfeebled, even as a satirist, by his want of passion, and as a poet by his want of imagination.

Dryden comes next; and many will be disposed to rank him at the very head of the list of British satirists, although he must take a secondary rank among our British poets. His warm admirers, we know, think that he stooped to the satirist—that he—

> Born for the universe, narrowed his mind,
> And for party gave up what was meant for mankind.

but we beg leave to doubt, if without the infusion of certain elements which he possessed not, such as conscientiousness, piety, and true affection, he could ever have been much higher than a satirical writer, not to speak of his want of dramatic skill, constructive power, and poetic imagination in the proper sense of that word. His dramas, as a whole, are elaborate piles of pollution, libels on human nature, as disgraceful to the author as they are false in themselves, satires in all but wit, truth, and moral feeling. His didactic poems are eloquent evasions of the questions they profess to discuss; they show more power than probity, more learning than earnestness. His descriptive pieces, prologues, etc., are mere rubbish gilded by an imagination cold as winter moonlight. His odes and songs seem rather the transient breathings of some passing geni over the instrument of his mind, than its native utterances. His fables are powerful translations of greater poets. But in his satires, Dryden is intensely himself. There are various things which distinguish the monkey from the man, such as generalising power, enthusiasm, love, etc.; but, perhaps, nothing more marks the differential quality of humanity than the reasonableness, depth, and

duration of its aversions,—no better proof of the existence of *anima* (or soul) than the peculiar nature of *animus* or animosity. Dryden disgusting in his loves, false in his panegyrics, feeble in his pictures, and factitious in his enthusiasms—is in his abuse, invective, and derision thoroughly true and manlike. He not only throws his whole heart but his whole understanding into his anger. He not only hates, but gives substantial grounds for his hatred; and proves thus that his is no capricious flame like that of an ape, or that of an infant, but the strong steady ire of an enlightened man. In three points only do we deem him inferior to Juvenal, first in that compression of language in which the Latin poet so excels, and in which now and then he almost rivals the sublime cypher of Tacitus, his contemporary; secondly, in that deep impression which Juvenal leaves on you, that his hatred of vice is as habitual as is his contempt for meanness or folly, and that he is not only a man, but a good man angry; and thirdly, in the strain of general accusation into which the Roman more frequently than the Englishman is hurried, and which converts his satires from clever party diatribes into broad moral pictures. Dryden, on the other hand, excels Juvenal and all satirists in the ease and the masterly force of his satirical dissections, as well as in a vein of humour, which is stealthily visible at times, in the intervals of his wrathful mood. In certain passing and profound touches, like the fires of Egypt which ran along the ground, scorching all things while they pursued their unabated speed, the two are nearly on a level.

Swift might be described as consisting originally of two parts —sense, and selfish passion, which was sure, in certain circumstances, to ferment into a spirit of satire, "strong as death, and cruel as the grave." Born without much natural benevolence, with no purely poetic imagination, with furious passions, and unbounded ambition, he was entirely dependent, for his peace of mind, upon success. Had he become as he was by his talents entitled to be, the Prime Minister of his day, he would have figured as a greater tyrant in the Cabinet than even Chatham. But as he was prevented from becoming the first statesman, he became the first satirist of his time. From vain efforts at supremacy for himself and his party, he retired growling to his Dublin-den, and there, as Haman thought scorn to lay his hand on Mordecai, but extended his murderous purpose to all the people of the Jews, and as Nero wished that all Rome had one neck that he might destroy it at a blow, so Swift dared,

to rear himself so to speak, on the back of his own personal disappointment, and to hurl out scorn at man and suspicion at his Maker. It was not, it must be noticed, enmity at the evil which is in man, which excited his hatred and contempt, it was man himself. He was not merely as many are, disgusted with the selfish and malignant elements which are mingled in man's nature and character, and disposed to trace them to any cause save a Divine will, but he believed man to be as a whole, the work and child of the devil, and he told the imaginary creator and creature to their face what he thought the truth, "The devil is an ass." His was the very madness of Manicheanism. That heresy untruly held, that the devil was one of two aboriginal creative powers, but Swift believed him to be the only God. From a Yahoo man it was inevitable to infer a demon deity. It is very laughable to find writers in *Blackwood* and elsewhere, striving to prove Swift a Christian, as if, whatever were his professions and however sincere even he might be in these at times, the whole tendency of his writings, his perpetual and unlimited abuse of man's body and soul, his denial of every human virtue, the filth he pours upon every phase of human nature, and the doctrine he so often insinuates that man has fallen indeed, but fallen not from the angel, but from the animal, or rather is just a bungled brute, were not enough to show that either his notions were grossly erroneous and perverted, or that he himself deserved like another Nebuchadnezzar, to be driven from men, and to have a beast's heart given to him. After all this it were ridiculous to praise his powers of satire. He was not a satirist but a minor Satan, who surprised man naked and asleep, looked at him with microscopic eyes, ignored all his peculiar marks of fallen dignity and of incipient godhood, and in heartless rhymes reported accordingly.

Pope belonged in some measure to the same school as Swift, but the *feminine* element which was in him, mellowed and modified his feelings. He had little truth of nature, but he had some tenderness of heart. He was also more successful, (according to his idea of success) and a happier man than Swift. He was very much smaller too in soul as well as in body, and his gall organ was proportionable. Swift's feeling to humanity was a black malignity, Pope's a tiny malice. Swift was a man, nay a monster of misanthropy. Pope always reminds us of an injured and pouting hero of Lilliput, "doing well to be angry" under the gourd of a pocket-flap, or squealing out his griefs from the centre of an empty snuff-box. In minute and micro-

scopic vision of human infirmities, Pope excels even Swift, but then you always conceive Swift leaning down—a giant, although a gnarled stature—to behold them, while Pope is on their level, and has only to look straight before him. It is curious to notice how both are stung by their very different degrees of satirical feeling into poetry. But how different the poetry of Swift from that of Pope! Swift's, which comes out only in his most vehement prose, is more fierce and terrible than even Juvenal's, it is, "black fire and horror,"—think of his description of war and of statesmanship in the last parts of Gulliver's travels—descriptions in which, working with the barest and coldest words, he produces the effects of poetry, as though a hot furnace should be fuelled with snow. Pope, again, never waxes so lofty and so poetical as when he has lashed himself, with long struggle, and after many unsuccessful efforts, into an enthusiasm of moral fury. Whether this be simulated or not, and we are afraid it often is, it is then and then only that he soars above the mere satirist and artist, and becomes the poet. In polish and delicate strokes, in damning hints and annihilating whispers, where "more is meant than meets the ear," Pope excels all satirists.

Young, of the *Night Thoughts*, has written one very vigorous satire, *The Universal Passion*, in which, however, there is far too much point. There is more energy, but less refinement than in Pope, and he does not take high enough, that is Christian ground, in denouncing the undue love of fame. He amends this error in the *Night Thoughts*, which, besides, contain a number of satirical touches, superior, we think, to anything in his professed satires. Blair's *Grave*, too, abounds in bold and poignant satire,—indeed it might almost have been entitled *The Sepulchre, a Satirical Poem*.

In reference to Churchill, we coincide with the editor of Mr. Nichol's edition, and may quote his words: "He was emphatically a John Bull, sublimated. He rushed into the poetic arena more like a pugilist than a poet, laying about him on all sides, giving and taking strong blows, and appearing himself, in the language of 'the fancy,' game to the back-bone. His faults, besides those incident to most satirists, such as undue severity, intrusion into private life, anger darkening into malignity, and spleen fermenting into venom, were carelessness of style, inequality, and want of condensation; Dryden was his favourite model, and although he has written no such condensed masterpieces of satire, as the characters of Shaftesbury and Buckingham, yet his works as a whole are not much inferior, and justify the

idea that, had his life been spared, he might have risen to the level of 'Glorious John.' His versification, too, is decidedly of the Drydenic type. It is a free, fierce, rushing, sometimes staggering race across meadow, moor, and mountain, dreading nothing except repose and languor, the lines chasing, and sometimes *tumbling over each other in their haste*, like impatient hounds at a fox-hunt. But more than Dryden, we think, has Churchill displayed the genuine poetic faculty, as well as a higher species of moral indignation."

Johnson, strong in all things, although clumsy in many, was peculiarly strong in satire, and more adroit and polished in that field than in any other. *London* is more powerful and scarcely less elegant than the best of Pope's satires, and both it and the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, have a solemn dignity characteristic of the *Rambler*. Johnson *might* have been the greatest satirist that ever lived. He possessed all the mental and all the moral qualities necessary for perfection in the art, and was free from many of the drawbacks and disqualifications of ordinary satirists. He could hate but not loathe, his enmity did not amount to malice; a man of sterling honesty and worth, he would have disdained to attack errors which were his own; possessed of prodigious power of crushing contempt, he would have applied it only to objects and persons who deserved it, and he would never have lost sight of grand moral purposes. In verse, too, his thought was generally more precise and his language more pointed and condensed than in prose. How by a few more *Londons*, written in the full maturity of his powers he could have blasted the Bolingbrokes, Malletts, Humes, and Voltaires, as well as exposed the frivolities, affectations, political follies and moral delinquencies of his day! How one would like to have seen such dragon-flies as Churchill, Horne, and Wilkes, preserved in his amber, and to have beheld the shadowy form of Junius reflected on the clear, stern, and masculine current of his verse!

Junius and Burke possessed the elements of splendid satirists, although neither of them wrote in verse. Junius might be called the Pope, and Burke the Juvenal of prose satirists. The sting of Junius is polished to the last degree of perfection, and actually glitters; the poison he administers is sweet—it is sugar of lead. You think as you compare the *animus* of the man with the elegance and coolness of his language, of the lines:—

> The ground burns frore,
> And cold performs the effect of fire.

Burke is incomparably more fervent and poetical, and is more

frequently exasperated into invective, but has touches of sarcasm quite as powerful and as delicate as anything in Junius. In fact, like Minerva from the brain of Jove, Junius might have issued from a corner of Burke's capacious and all-sided mind, and we are not singular in thinking, that many of the best things in his letters actually did.

In Cowper we see the greatest of all *Christian* satirists. That the spirit of Christianity could form any compromise with that of satire or invective had been doubted, although the perusal of the last chapter of 2 Peter and of Jude might have rendered the doubt unnecessary. Cowper by his poetry completed the proof. In his satires and in portions of his task, we see the tenderness of a lover united to the terrible wrath of an ancient prophet. The "red and burning" flower of his anger is rooted in the soil of love. The cries of a mother to a child whom she sees approaching the brink of a torrent are often fierce, nay frantic, and so with the *Expostulations* of Cowper. In milder and more playful moods how admirably has he shown off the fopperies and follies, and minor vices of his age! And although a melancholy-haunted man, it is singular that not a drop of *venom* flows either in his prose or his poetry.

Peter Pindar, or Dr. Wolcot, was once a most popular satirist. Robert Chambers in his *Life of Burns*, speaks of him, we think, with too much contempt, as if he had been an overrated, and were now a detected and forgotten quack. Now whatever Wolcot might be, —coarse, savage, sensual, and unprincipled, an impostor certainly he was not any more than was William Cobbett. He was no poet, but his smaller pieces show an infinite fund of coarse wit and humour, and his intellect was evidently of a powerful order. His *Lousiad* is now deservedly doomed to oblivion and contempt, but his *Bozzy and Pozzi* shall remain as a very clever specimen of the literary satire, and his conduct to Opie the painter, showed that under a very rough exterior there beat a heart.

Burns, in satire as in every other species of poetry, proved the unbounded resources of his genius as well as the defects of his education and the coarseness of his taste. There is more malice in some of his satirical pieces than one would have expected from the lover of "the silly sheep and the owrie cattle," and the author of "Poor Mailie's Elegy." Those ladies who dote on lapdogs and those men who fancy goats, are not generally the most benevolent. Naturally Burns had a warm heart, but his unfortunate circumstances and ill-regulated passions prematurely

soured him at life. In one thing he deserves praise. He has not affected any more morality than he had, he sometimes deplores in himself, but he seldom attacks in others the sins which "did more easily beset him," for it is obvious, that the vices of such a man as "Holy Willie," could not, considering his professions, etc., be ranked under the same category as those of "Rob the Ranter." In all Burns's satirical pieces you see the genuine spirit, and hear the tongue of a *caird*, as well as of a poet, they contain an equal mixture of *jaw* and genius.

It is many years since we read old Mathias's *Pursuits of Literature*, and we dare hardly, at this distance of time, pronounce upon its merits. Its lines seemed massive, but dull, and many of them were mere pegs on which to hang copious and learned exercitations, crossed by deep dashes of malice, in the shape of notes. The book is now for ever shelved, and so too, we suspect, are the *Baviad and Maviad*, those once famous masterpieces of Gifford.

In Crabbe, as a satirist, we notice this peculiarity, he is one of the first, of our country at least, who has interwoven the didactic satire with the narrative poem. He shows vice, not sitting still for its picture, but moving briskly along—folly, not stationary at its mirror, but "footing it on the light fantastic toe" in the mazy circles of a life-long dance,—wickedness and absurdity, not in the abstract, but in the concrete. His satires are all more or less stories. This has given them freshness and blood-warmth, and made them hover between the satirical novel and the satirical poem. His vein is sufficiently caustic, and his descriptions are as usual with him, literally and sternly true; but, like Cowper, kindness and pity are half-seen skulking behind the severities of the strain. Individuals he seldom assails, his castigations are in general those of classes of men, and he evidently is constrained to this work by sheer necessity of nature, or by stress of situation and circumstances, not by inclination or elaborate purpose. A mirror must equally act as a mirror in pandemonium or in paradise.

Byron had two phases in his satirical career, first in his "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," and secondly, in his "Don Juan" and "Vision of Judgment." In the first he was just Pope in a passion and a hurry, there was more spirit than refinement, more effort than edge, he seldom rose above clever Billingsgate; in the second, he had found the fountains of another Acheron, and dark and terrible were the outpourings.

He wrote besides a secret series of libels against personal friends which attained to the measure of the "Legion Club," but only some of which have been printed. Every one who has read, must remember his lines on Rogers, beginning with—

> Nose and lips would shame a knocker—

—going over in language of the fiercest ribaldry, the whole man from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, and closing the diatribe with the words:—

> For his merits wouldst thou know 'em,
> Once he wrote a pretty poem.

He had indited a gallery of such things, besides a dictionary of all the names of his friends with the bitterest satirical commentary annexed to each. How much this was owing to despair, or to madness, or to drunkenness, or to the mere love of mischief, we cannot determine; but sometimes, when thinking of them, we are reminded of the words of Hatteraick to Glossin, when jumping up and surveying him from head to heel, he cried, "I don't see the goat's (cloven) foot, and yet he is the very devil!" It should never be forgotten, that although himself perpetually on the border of madness and of suicide, Byron wrote some epigrams insulting the melancholy close of Castlereagh's unfortunate career. These are, in his own words, deeds that "must not away." They cast a fearful light on the state of a heart which infidelity had combined with a thousand selfish passions to make as hard as the nether millstone. It is sadder still to remember that his genius never exerted itself so powerfully as in the service of the worst feelings of his nature.

Moore has not sinned in his satire after the same fashion, or to the same extent as Byron. Nor has he displayed a tithe of the same power. He has unloosened against his enemies a fearful flight of needles and pins, the brightest pins and needles which Birmingham or Sheffield ever bore. Such flights are his "Two-penny Post-bag," his "Fudge Family," his "Cash, Corn, Currency, and Catholics." What smartness! what sparkle! what tiny splendour! what minnikin speed! But not even a child could suffer any serious consequences from them. To Pope, Moore is inferior, not in his brilliance or point, but solely in *animus*. Pope has the malignity of the famous Lilliputian (we forget his name) who was the means of ostracising Gulliver from that matchless empire. Moore is mustard-seed in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, very sharp, but better

at tickling the ears than piercing to the hearts of the Bottoms of the day.

Coleridge, amidst all his wonderful doings, has seldom done anything more wonderful than such little copies of satirical or abusive verse as "The Two Round Spaces," and "Fire, Famine, and Slaughter." In the first of these he has, for the nonce, raised the spirit of Swift from his grave, and made him curse MacIntosh by his gods. A line more infernal does not exist in literature than the following:—

I trust he lies in his grave awake!

And yet Coleridge was, even when writing this, an amiable as well as a gifted man. It was entirely an act of poetical simulation. And so was that higher mood in which he commissioned the hags of famine, fire, and slaughter, to hold a consultation on the best means of avenging the cause of liberty on the head of William Pitt, and when one of them exclaimed:—

O thankless beldames and untrue,
And is this all that ye can do?
I alone am faithful, I
Cling to him everlastingly.

Shelley, except in "Peter Bell the Third," has written no satire, and that, sooth to say, is more remarkable for emasculated blasphemy than for power. Wordsworth has here and there a satirical touch worthy of any master of the art, as when he says:—

Philosopher—a fingering slave,
One that would peep and botanise
Upon his mother's grave.

Leigh Hunt is often peculiarly graceful and felicitous in his versified sarcasms. Bulwer's *New Timon* was an experiment which has not been so successful as to have induced him to repeat it. Tennyson, in his "Vision of Sin," and Bailey, in some parts of *Festus*, have given good specimens of a kind of Mephistophilean satire. In prose satire this age is rich, as *Punch*, and the novels of Thackeray, Bulwer, and Dickens, the speeches of Andrew Thomson, Brougham, and D'Israeli, and the criticisms of Jeffrey, Lockhart, and Wilson have proved. Cobbett and Christopher North have been perhaps the most powerful satirists of their day, although in very different styles; the satire of the one resembling the rich, quiet, out-flow of some oil of death; that of the other, an uproarious ocean wave, dashing and drowning all before it, in its salt spray and fierce resounding surges.

Of the *pros* and *cons* of satire, and the question, how far it might be useful to the progress of society, we cannot enlarge. Much might be, and has been said on both sides. Dryden has said:—

> Most satirists are indeed a public scourge,
> Their mildest medicine is a farrier's purge!

two lines which John Struthers of the "Poor Man's Sabbath" took for the motto of a most vigorous and eloquent onslaught on satire which appeared in 1817, in an interesting but forgotten Glasgow periodical called *The Student*. We think, that as satire has often been written, it has done very little good, either to individuals or the community, having been too frequently, either the mere outlet of spleen, or the instrument of party feeling, or an ostentatious display of mental power. But it might have been otherwise, it has sometime been otherwise, and it may be always otherwise by and by. Why should the devil and the devil-inspired have all the laughter to themselves? Why should not a ridicule arise, that might become in reality the test of truth? Why should not men who are at once sons of genius and of God, who at once pity and laugh at folly, hate the sin, and love the sinner, while they scourge both, appear in our literary horizon, and create a species of sublimer satire than the pages even of a Juvenal, or a Cowper, or a Pascal have yet displayed. Should this hope be realised, we are certain that the world would welcome a regenerated and reformed satire, and would rank it amongst the very brightest and noblest varieties of poetry.

THE LATE DR. SAMUEL BROWN[1]

THERE is nothing in the history of this strange world more mysterious than the records it contains of the early deaths, or more painful still, the abortive lives of the gifted. What *can* be the reason that so many princely-seeming streams, which began their course among the hills, wantoning in their strength, and yet with arrowy eagerness and directness seeking the main, are swallowed up in sand, or go down like that river in the Happy Valley of Rasselas, into a dark gulf, where, after a few bubbling groans, and reluctant struggles, their voice is heard no more, without reaching the ocean—that so many orbs, glorifying the evening east, and promising a far more excelling glory in the course of their progress, are eclipsed and darkened ere the zenith is reached, and leave, on the spectators, a bitterness of disappointment, proportioned to the exaltation of their hopes, and the eloquence of their uttered anticipations as to their future career? Dew-drops, roses, foam-bells, you do not expect to remain—their brilliancy and their brevity are identical; but in stars—the sons of the morning—you look for a career as long as the horizon of heaven; for a rising, culmination, and declinature; a beginning, middle, and end; but how often, alas! you look in vain, and see the end ere the full beginning. Why is this? Is it from mere chance—the blind Fury with the abhorred shears? Or, is it from that envious wrath of Apollo, of which the Pagans speak, which will not suffer the gifted to become the god-like, nor the beautiful the perfect, nor the strong the omnipotent, nor the lofty to reach the clouds? Or, is it from the weakness of bodily constitution, which is often connected with, or produced by great intellectual energy? Or, is it from an unwise expenditure of early strength in study, blended with an undue indulgence of a thirst for pleasure? Or, is it from the coldness, neglect, and persecution which all rising spirits encounter, and under which, many succumb? Or, is it from a combination of some or all of these causes? Whatever the reason be, the fact is certain; and we need not quote the familiar names of Burns, Byron, Chatterton, Keats, Kirke White, and

[1] From the *Scottish Review*, October 1857.

Shelley, while our own times abound with such painful and numerous instances.

But far more melancholy, as we have just said, an abortive life than an early death. Our readers remember Browning's poem, "The Lost Leader," and the meaning of it. How many "Lost Leaders"—men who aimed at guiding the march of society, and possessed adequate powers for the task—have in this age wearied in the greatness of their way, or stepped aside into some by-path of evil, or turned right round on a retrograde course, or have been simply baffled in some mighty undertaking they had proposed for themselves, and found, when too late, that they had mistaken their work, and confounded aspiration with aptitude! It is with deep pain that we must rank among this class, the brilliant, accomplished, and eloquent person whose name we have prefixed to this article—one who had created the very highest expectations, but who, recently cut off in the prime of life, united, in his unfortunate story, *both* the mysterious malconditions mentioned above. He died prematurely, and he died a defeated man; although in an attempt so bold, that his very failure in it is fame.

About seventeen years ago, there was a very remarkable cluster of youths attending the University of Edinburgh, and well known on its streets and public walks. Three of them were especially prominent, and were often seen together. One was a tall, fair-complexioned young man, with a somewhat stooping gait, long yellow hair hanging over his shoulders, in the style of ancient pictures, and dull and downcast, but thoughtful eyes. Arm-in-arm with him there often walked a thinner youth, with hair as dark as the raven's wing, floating down in masses, and forming a piquant contrast to the bright locks of his companion, a pale, long face, nose slightly hooked, high, well-arched forehead, and searching, rather than brilliant eyes. The opinions of the street were considerably divided about this singular pair. Many set them down as intolerable and empty coxcombs. Others stamped them as irredeemable and impudent young scamps. The better informed, however, knew, that along with, probably, a considerable dash of both the puppy and the roué, they were among the ablest of the rising savants of the Modern Athens; and were inclined to hope, that when their wild oats were fairly sown, they would reach very high distinction. Often, but not habitually, there appeared in their company another, less ostentatiously singular in his appearance, about the middle

size in height; his dark hair not quite so Absalomic in its longitude, his aspect simply that of an ordinary clever student, save for a certain rapt expression which glimmered in his grey eye, and over his thin, pale visage; his gait elastic, and his air joyous. Such was the trinity of Edinburgh scientific genius in the years 1838-9-40. The name of the first was Cunningham, who promised to become one of the first geologists of the day, but who died early, without having done anything to justify the estimation of his friends. The second was Edward Forbes, the recently-removed and deeply-lamented Professor of Natural History in Edinburgh; and the third was Samuel Brown.

Edward Forbes and Brown, besides belonging to a society called the "Order of Truth"—the badge of which lay in a silver triangle, suspended by a red riband—delivered a course of lectures together in Edinburgh, 1840, which were much admired by the select few who attended them. Let us treasure up a few reminiscences of the only time we ever met the first of these, before coming to a somewhat enlarged estimate of the second.

We had been invited by a common friend to meet Edward Forbes, at a quiet dinner-party in Edinburgh, in November 1839, but owing to some other engagement, he did not appear. In two months afterwards, however, he came to a festival in Dundee, then held annually on the birthday of James Watt. At this time he was comparatively little known, except as the editor of *Yarrel's British Fishes*. Our friend had forewarned us to expect a man of almost universal accomplishments; a naturalist, an artist, a writer, and a speaker, as well as of wondrous original promise in the path of scientific discovery. Ere the meeting began, in which we were also to take some part, we were introduced to him. He was about twenty-five years of age, although a certan quiet and settled air might have augured another lustrum. He had no undue gravity, or severity about his aspect, but although not pensive—

Thoughtful seemed the boy for one so young.

He looked older at twenty-five than Samuel Brown afterwards did, when we last saw him, at thirty-four. His manner was easy and agreeable, but wanted that buoyant frankness, and beaming cordiality which, in his happier moods, distinguished Brown above all men we ever knew. In select social society, however, and when perfectly at home, Forbes, we have heard, became a most genial and even joyous being. Sitting with a chairman of considerable bulk between us, we could not pursue

any consecutive stream of talk, or do more than telegraph across the human continent, a few scattered observations about the able and worthy friend, W. Bridges, now of London, who had made us acquainted, and about the genius of Coleridge,—some lines of whose poetry Forbes had quoted in his speech. It was, we think, the beautiful verse—

> He prayeth well who loveth well
> Both men, and bird, and beast;
> He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things, both great and small,
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all.

Forbes' speech was a very fine one. It was not eloquent, emphatic, or fluent; but there was a scientific elegance, a distinctness and definitude about it, and a quiet enthusiasm in its delivery, which made it very effective. All we remember of it was, that he represented himself that morning, while waiting for the coach, pausing beside a little pool, and thinking to himself, what an interesting book might be written on the natural history of that little pool! It is our deep regret that we never saw the gifted naturalist again. Shortly after this, he sailed up the Mediterranean, on a voyage of natural observation; and on his return was appointed Professor of Natural History in King's College, London. Thence he came to Edinburgh, where he was cut off suddenly in 1854, in his fortieth year, death disappointing thus the highest hopes of the scientific world. Brown, who always talked of Forbes as a Cuvier in the germ, was lying on his long seven years' deathbed, when he heard of his friend's departure. He took up his pen, and inscribed in his journal, an exquisitely beautiful tribute to his memory, which has recently been published in the *North British Review*. He speaks of him there as another Humboldt in tendency and capacity of mind, although not in actual achievement. He unfortunately resembled Humboldt, too, in ignoring religion. He was never, indeed, an infidel, nor even a sceptic, but simply had shunned the subject; and while a great natural philosopher, was also a specimen of the natural man. Seldom has Naturalism nourished such a true and fine spirit as that of Edward Forbes.

We have no purpose of writing the life of Samuel Brown, or even of chronicling completely the leading events of his history. The amiable and able relation of his, who indited the late beautiful paper in the *North British Review*, is, we understand, to collect his remains, correspondence, etc., and to prefix to

them a memoir. Our purpose in this paper is, to trace his life from the point where we first came in contact with him; and then shortly to sum up our impressions of his character and genius.

We first met Samuel Brown in Edinburgh, in the spring of 1841. We were much struck with his pale and vivid face, his alert and nimble intellect, his lively conversation, and the enthusiasm which seemed a blood within his blood, the soul of his soul, the heart of his heart. We remember the delight with which he listened to a recitation of Aird's "Devil's Dream on Mount Acksbeck,"—a poem he had never met nor heard of before. One line in it especially struck him, and continued, he told us afterwards, to haunt him for years, while pursuing his "dim and perilous way" through the abyss of scientific research—

The *silent magnanimity* of Nature and her God.

"I should love," he wrote us, "the man, although he had never written another line." In July the same year, accompanied by a devoted friend, who sacrificed his all in life to his aid in research, Brown visited our dwelling, and we spent some of the most delightful days of our life in their society. We visited with him Glammis Castle—that huge pile of antique masonry, lying amidst its ancestral trees, and commanding, from its leaden roof, a view of the magnificent valley of Strathmore; and Dunkeld, which latter place was dearer to him, because he had, some years before, spent several summer weeks there, in company with his father, who was now dead. How vividly we remember our walk to the hermitage, along the banks of the Tay, sparkling in the bright summer noon, under its umbrageous canopy of tall trees,—the view of the braes of Athole,—yellowing towards harvest—at which we "gazed ourselves away"; the return by Invar; our entering the inn where Dr. Thomas Brown used to spend his vacations; our inquiring at the landlord if he had any recollection of such a man—he had never heard of him! Samuel Brown admired his namesake more then than he did afterwards. We noticed, in reference to his admiration of nature, that it was rather critical and æsthetic, than warm, gushing, and boy-like. He did not clap his hands, or utter exclamations of delight while gazing at a beautiful scene; and he seemed rather to be thinking how such and such a cloud, or mountain, or bit of sky would tell in a painting, than surrendering his spirit to its fascination. His

enthusiasm for nature was rather that of the painter than of the poet. We found then, and often afterwards, that his knowledge and love of literature and art were not inferior to his mastery over science. Indeed, we doubted then, and doubt still, if his true calling had not been to some one or other of the fields lying more immediately under the domain of the Beautiful or Artistic. Perhaps oratory, or poetry, or literary criticism, owes a deep grudge to that sterner science which carried him off, and gave him more blows than rewards. His delight in original poetry was very intense; and we recollect how, when he heard repeated, at the top of the Law of Dundee, Blake's "Lines to a Tiger,"—

> Tiger, tiger, burning bright,
> In the forest of the night, etc.

which, strange to tell, he had never heard or seen before, he almost shook with emotion. We may here mention that he himself was one of the best readers of poetry we ever heard. His voice had not the deep tones, the lingering cadences, or the wild and wailing pathos of Wilson, nor the tremulous, subdued enthusiasm, the thin and thrilling energy, as of a spirit's tongue, which mark the recitation of De Quincey—but in grace, variety of intonation, and a certain yearning earnestness of utterance, he stood alone. We heard a celebrated Scotch professor recently give a public reading from Shakspere, in which he effectually avenged the murder of Duncan by murdering *Macbeth*; and we thought, at the time, how differently would it have been read by Samuel Brown! He read especially well those passages which seek to express the higher aspects of science and philosophy in poetry; such as the lines in *Faust*, so admirably rendered by Dr. Anster—

> Oh! how the spell before my sight
> Brings nature's hidden ways to light.
> See all things with each other blending—
> Each to all its being lending;
> All on each in turn depending:
> Heavenly ministers descending,
> And again to heaven up-tending—
> Floating, mingling, interweaving,
> Rising, sinking, and receiving;
> Each for each, while each is giving
> On to each, and each relieving:
> Each the pails of gold, the living
> Current through the air is heaving;
> Breathing blessings: see them bending
> Balanced worlds from change defending,
> While everywhere diffused is harmony unending.

or, some verses, written by a relation of his own, and founded on a passage in one of his lectures, beginning—

> A Power and a Glory of silence lay
> O'erbrooding the lonely primeval Day,
> Ere yet unwoven the veil of Light
> Through which shineth forth the Eternal Might.
> When the Will on the infinite void went forth,
> And stirred it with pangs of god-like birth,
> And forth sprung the Twain, in which doth lie
> Infolded, all being of earth and sky.
> . . . . . .
> Then rested the Will, for his work was done.

These words, which embody his notion that God originally created two atoms, which by incessant increment, opposition to, yet circulation round each other, produced in due time the stupendous phenomenon of the universe,—when read in his "sable, silvered" tones to a London audience, thrilled them to the inmost soul, and many inquired if they were not translated from Goethe.

Toward the close of 1841, Brown repaired to London, and delivered at the City of London Institution a course of chemical lectures, with marked *éclat*. He was meanwhile pursuing his experiments, with a view to prove that all forms of matter are transformable into each other; and meeting with many startling results, especially in reference to the apparent isomerism of carbon and silicon, and of iron and rhodium. In order to save himself from the distractions of society, we have been told that he and his two associates, one a brother, and the other a friend, while living on bread and water, actually *shaved their heads;* and found, in this monkish nudity, a pretext for prosecuting their studies night and day. This year also, he issued his first "Lay Sermon, by Victorious Analysis, Christ Church;" which was followed early in 1842 by the second. They were not generally popular, but they won their way to the esteem of not a few true-hearted and inquiring spirits. Both were objectionable in point of style, which was far too slavishly modelled on that of Carlyle; nor was the sentiment entirely unexceptionable. But few writers of the age have equalled some of their passages; such as the description in the first, of the faith of Abraham, with his "strong heart, fit to be the first strong heart of a people;" or, "the proclamation of the infinitude of Duty;" and in the second, the inimitable description of his father's appearance, his manner of life, and the tender instructions he was wont to convey to his children—pointing out marks of design

to them in the large blue branching veins of his right hand,—" blessed characters that they were "—or drawing with his staff sand orreries upon the beach. If the public generally treated these sermons coldly, and if a powerful, but generous mastiff flew at the throat of the author, in the *United Secession Magazine*, Brown was consoled by the approbation of the Cambridge students, who bought up a large remainder of the second sermon, which had been lying like a dead stock on the publishers' hands; and by a letter from Carlyle, which ran to the following effect:—" If Victorious Analysis choose to preach again, he may depend on me as an auditor for one. Even although it should appear that he is not preaching in Christ Church, or in any church as yet named, or nameable among men, let him not be discouraged. Immensity itself is a temple, and the blue dome of heaven a nobler one than St. Paul's at the top of Ludgate Hill. V. A. seems to me an earnest, gifted young man; perhaps with a long, hard struggle before him, but not without victory at the end of it, and in the course of it."—T. C.

This summer he visited his then idol, at Chelsea; and on coming home, sat down and wrote us a most eloquent letter, which we keenly regret having lost, describing the interview. What his ultimate views of *Carlyle* were we know not; but his religious opinions seem ultimately to have diverged *toto coelo* from *Carlyleism*. In 1842, however, the Chelsea Prophet seemed to him the greatest of men, and his system, or rather negation of all systems, was hailed as a token for good to the distracted time.

In the autumn of this year he returned to Scotland, and took up his dwelling in that strange place in Portobello, which his friend in the *North British* has so picturesquely described. It was one of the queerest abodes which eccentric genius ever selected for itself. On the outer-door was inscribed the mystic word, " Hades." On entering you found yourself in a cold kitchen, without a spark of fire, or a single piece of furniture. Climbing a dark and winding stair, you came to two apartments —one a sleeping-room, library, and larder all in one—the other, the laboratory: both teeming with cups and bottles of divers kinds. Crosses, devices, mottoes, such as, " Perfect through suffering," " Laborare est orare," etc., garnished the otherwise cold and cheerless walls. The beds were (Scottice) *shake-downs*, with the exception of one in a closet, reserved for any chance guest, and in which we frequently reposed. On the floor of the room lay an enormous chest full of letters. The books were fit

and few—Coleridge, Humphrey Davy, a few mathematical and physical treatises, a huge folio copy of the entire works of Paracelsus, which had been presented our friend by Sir William Hamilton; mixed with a number of fragmentary and mysterious seeming MSS., being portions of lectures, essays, etc., from his pen. Such a den of genius! And then, as you entered it, there was the wizard himself, with his worn, thoughtful, yet mildly-radiant face, his frank, easy manners, and his plain, working attire, surmounted by a cap, on which were inscribed the signs of the Zodiac! And after the hours of labour were over, came those consecrated to friendship, and to fun. What talks then took place, what speculations were broached, what wild laughter echoed through, and peopled with ecstasy, the comfortless rooms! The fare generally consisted of mutton pies, washed down by *jugs* of tea, and perfumed by clouds of tobacco smoke. There were other occasions when some of the rising literati and savants of Edinburgh,—such as the two Russells, David Masson, Alexander Ross, Ruffini, Dr. John Brown *junior*, etc.,—came down to hear little lectures on atomics, and learn their dim laws at the eloquent lips of the inhabitant of "Hades." Sometimes, alas! instead of spending the evening of his days of hard toil in cheerful society, or refreshing repose, the fire in the alchymist's laboratory, or the lamp in his study, burned all night long—testifying, either that he was watching the result of long and perilous processes, or that he was yearning and wrestling over the composition of those wild, unrhymed magnificent odes to Nature, which most of his essays and lectures essentially were. There can be little doubt that his health was materially injured by his continued residence amidst the discomforts, the hard work, and night watchings of his Portobello hermitage.

On October 5, 1842, Samuel Brown came over to Dundee, to deliver a short course of lectures at the Watt Institution; and on that evening we first heard him address a public assembly. "Come back into memory," says Charles Lamb, "as thou wert in the spring-time of thy fancies, while hope still rose before thee like a fiery column, the dark side not yet turned, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, logician, metaphysician, bard." Come back to our memory as thou wert in *thy* hot youth, thy heart boiling with enthusiasm, thy brain throbbing with bright and new imaginations, thy tongue touched with fire, as always when "men gathered around thee, and the stars came out," Samuel Brown, chymist, philosopher, orator, and poet! and let us hear

again thy beautiful accents, soft as woman's, yet strong in the vigour of manly youth; warbling their wondrous story through the deepening shadows, and the solemn starry silence of these charmed autumnal eves! Brown came to Dundee a stranger to all but ourselves; but won golden opinions as fast and plentifully as if the soil had been Australia the fiery red, instead of Angus-shire the frigid. His eloquence was then, we think, more simply and enthusiastically powerful than it became afterwards. There was less art, but more nature—less looking in his style and manner to the audience, and more into the dim depths of the atom-universe, as if he felt himself standing immediately between it and God. Notes he then had none; nay, as soon almost conceive of Paul speaking from one of his "parchments" before King Agrippa, while his honour and life were hanging in suspense! His style and language were those of a young enthusiast, who had come before his companions to the brink of a precipice, overhanging a glorious prospect; and who, half turning back, and half looking down, was telling them, with cries and gestures, and flashing eyes, what lay below. This was especially true of the last lecture of the series, where he described the scale of elements under the image of a lyre—the various strings of which were constructed of one silver chord, and whose united melody was that one, yet manifold strain, resounding from all nature, of Glory to God in the highest; and in the close of which he so painted the possible annihilation of all things, that, when he stopped, the cessation of his voice, which had trembled under its images as it went on, seemed for a moment a pause in Nature's giant wheels; and we were tempted to look up to see if he had left Arcturus and the Great Bear still burning. Hundreds besides us can never forget the height to which he raised his audience that evening; even artisans and mechanics came home literally dancing with delight; and some were surprised into that "strange joy which they shall recognise in higher stages of their existence."

In private, on this occasion, we saw a great deal of him in his happiest moods; and he who had been electrifying large and motley audiences, by his sublime enthusiasm, no less delighted little circles on his return to the fireside, by his wit, humour, anecdotical vein, and thoroughly genial qualities. In the end of this year he revisited London; partly to lecture, and partly to submit his experiments to the tests of some eminent chymists, who all, however, declined. On his return to Edinburgh, Professor Gregory, then in Aberdeen, generously offered

to overlook his experiments, and attest them, if he found them successful; and Brown was preparing to journey northward, when the friendly professor was seized with severe and lengthened fever, and the purpose was indefinitely delayed.

In the spring of 1843, the chair of chemistry being about to become vacant, he was persuaded to deliver a course of critical lectures, four in number, and extending over four Saturdays. The audience was one of the most select ever assembled there. Chalmers, Sir W. Hamilton, Ferrier, Dr. John Brown, Christison, MacDougall, Simpson, John Cairns, are a few of those who sat in admiring wonder, listening to this youth of twenty-six, descanting on the "silent magnanimity of Nature and her God," as exhibited in the marvellous combinations, astounding surprises, subtle windings, and perpetual revolutions of chemistry's lowly, unseen, but real and awful world. At the close of the lectures, Chalmers, with even more than his usual glowing earnestness, returned the lecturer, amid acclamations, a vote of thanks; and saluted him as the Coleridge of Physicists. The delivery of this series, a series distinguished by a depth of thought, a philosophic calm of spirit, and a severe grandeur of language—such as he had never exhibited before in his lectures—was deemed a high step on his progress to the Edinburgh chair of chemistry; and formed, probably, the culmination alike of his popularity and his genius.

In the close of the year he stood as candidate for the vacant chair of chemistry. His friend in the *North British* has given a detail of some of the circumstances connected with this painful matter—a matter involving the great error of his life, or rather, a series of errors, from the effects of which he never fully recovered. In the first place, he was wrong in staking his claim to the chair, not on his general reputation, but on a special point, which he had not fully made out. Secondly, he erred in publishing an account of crude and incomplete experiments; so unsatisfactory, indeed, that his enemies alleged that some of them were mere myths. And thirdly, although his visit to Ireland, to have his experiments attested by Kane, thoroughly vouches for his integrity—for what man in his senses would have subjected merely imaginary or fraudulent results, to the eye of a profound and practised chymist?—yet his failure there was total; and instead of returning, as he and his friends expected, triumphant, he came back to resign his pretensions to the chair. We remember well the sickness of heart, and sorrow, with which we read the words of a correspondent:—

"The Alchymist has returned from Dublin, but *not*, alas! in triumph." On himself the discomfiture did not, apparently, produce much impression. Eminently buoyant in spirits, in the habit of thinking, if not of saying "The greatest of these is *Hope!*" he resumed his studies and experiments. We sigh still, as we think of his failure in obtaining the chair. Had he succeeded, he would probably have been yet alive—by far the brightest ornament of Edinburgh University; sustaining in his single self, the old prestige that university had acquired by the names of Robinson, Playfair, Stewart, Thomas Brown, Leslie, Chalmers, and Wilson; and hundreds flocking from every quarter of the land, to listen to his glowing lips, and to hear the deepest secrets of Nature revealed in the highest eloquence of Art. *Dis aliter visum est.*

In 1844 he continued working at his laboratory. We visited him in the course of the summer, and found him in "Hades," quietly preparing a paper on Sir Humphrey Davy, for the *North British Review*. He became intimate about this time with David Scott; and we called in his company, and often after, at the painting-room of that pale, spectral-seeming man, with his cold aspect and warm grasp of the hand—with the snow-surrounded volcano of his heart, and his strange, dreamy, unearthly genius. It was interesting to contrast the dull fire of David Scott's inspiration with the brilliant, sparkling flame of Brown's. Scott sat and listened to his lively friend, as Danton used to listen to Camille Desmoulins, "for hours together, and liked nothing so well." In conversation, Samuel Brown seldom said striking or memorable things; but a constant flow of felicitous expression, an apparent mastery of every subject he handled, an elasticity of movement, a distinctness and beauty of enunciation, a blending of ease and earnestness, of philosophy and fun, of the savant, the man of the world, and the poetic thinker, rendered his talk exceedingly charming. It was not like Carlyle's, a strong, rapid, but low-voiced torrent of burning images; nor like De Quincey's, a slow-welling, but perpetual fount of wisdom, gently touched with imagination, and softly rippled with humour; nor like Wilson's, a large, broad, lipful river of eloquent and musical speech; nor like Aird's, a pastoral burn, cheerfully chanting to its hazel shaws, grey rocks, and scattered pine trees—it resembled rather a fine, fluent hill-stream *diverted* into a gentleman's grounds, reflecting shaven lawns, enriching gardens, starred by fallen rose leaves and lily stalks, and yet retaining a portion of the original force and

freedom wherewith it had bickered and brawled amongst its native mountains.

In the close of 1844, appeared, in the glare of great expectation, the paper on Sir Humphrey Davy, and was generally adjudged to be worthy, but scarcely more than worthy of its author's genius. It contained many eloquent passages, and a just, if not a very enthusiastic estimate of Davy. Brown complained bitterly that worthy David Welsh, then editor of the *North British Review*, had sadly mutilated it by leaving out a large passage on Davy's religious opinions, which he thought by far the best in the paper, but which did not square with the editor's views, or with the shibboleth of the periodical. Brown's style in this article, as well as in the others he contributed to the same *Review*, to *Lowe's Magazine*, to the *Eclectic*, *Hogg's*, the *Massachussetts Quarterly*, was peculiar, and was not popular with the mass of readers. It was brilliant, but too laboured, abounding in recondite terms, lengthened and labyrinthine periods, in a sweeping confidence of statement, which bordered on dogmatism, and intermixed with the most serious passages, there was often a vein of smartness approaching flippancy. These were its faults, and lay on the surface—the depth and originality of the thinking, the ingenuity of the illustration, the catholicity of the spirit, and the glossy splendour of the better passages were less obvious, except to more perspicacious eyes. Had he completed the treatise he meditated, upon theology, or enlarged the critical lectures he delivered in Edinburgh into a volume, he must have greatly simplified and strengthened his style, which suited the lecture room rather than the closet, and which told far better when read in his charming tones, and accompanied by the glances of his eye, and that pale fire which shone out of his countenance, as he warmed in his theme, and made his face as it were the face of an angel, than when it appeared in cold, disenchanting print. This was remarkably exemplified in the case of his *Tragedy of Galileo*. He read passages of it to various friends, who were so delighted with his style of reading, that they unconsciously transferred the delight to the thing read, and advised him to publish it. When they saw the same passages in print they could hardly believe the identity. Brown was ill and in bed when he showed us his tragedy; we consequently read it directly in the MS., free from the illusory charm of his matchless elocution, and were considerably disappointed, and did not expect it to be even so good as after its publication we found it.

He wrote *Galileo* while confined to the house with a slight illness, in the summer of 1848, and published it about the close of the next year. While all admitted the beauty of the prologue, and the merit of many of the separate passages, the play was generally thought very imperfect, here and there even poor and silly; and the initiated deemed they saw in it a myth, too transparent, of the story of his own fortunes. Self-reference was a weakness from which he was not always exempt. In a speech delivered at the great Edinburgh Philosophical Soiree in 1846, he appeared, whether truly or not, to many in the audience, while speaking of the failure of Cavendish, to be covertly alluding to himself; and hence the frigid reception he met with, being in fact stopped in the delivery of a magnificent oration, the closing part of which, as we find it printed, resembles Lord Bacon in expansive thought, and Burke in eloquent and imaginative diction. He felt this check keenly, and his friends felt it still more; but enjoyed, in after years, a noble revenge in becoming one of the first favourites as a lecturer on the platform of that very institution.

During this period, while amusing himself with occasional reviews, lectures, etc., he was steadily prosecuting his chemical researches; although he had now left "Hades" for ever, and was residing in Edinburgh. He considered himself, as he often said, "consecrated to pure investigation," and that not literature, or art, or philosophy, but the atomic world was the true field for his genius. In 1849 he married, and took up his abode again in his beloved Portobello. This summer the disease, which ultimately carried him off, began to appear. When we visited him in September, we found him on a bed of languishing, pale, enfeebled, and we left him with a foreboding that we should never see him more. He rallied, however, during the winter, and delivered a brilliant and highly popular course of lectures, to the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution. This spring, a paper of his, in the *Eclectic*, on Gilfillan's *Second Gallery of Literary Portraits*, created against him a rather formidable opposition. He had used some unguarded expressions about "Man's happiness having no connection with his nearness to God," on which our noble friend, late of the *British Banner*, pounced upon him and accused him of heterodoxy. As generally happens in keenly-contested points, the truth lay between the contending parties. That the good alone enjoy true happiness in kind, seems abundantly obvious. But that their happiness is imperfect in degree, nay, that they are exposed to

doubts, fears, and miseries, peculiar to themselves, and often exquisitely agonising, is equally certain. Just as Genius has pleasures with which no stranger can intermeddle, but also pains and disquietudes which its own heart only knoweth, and is truly said to be

> Dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
> The love of love,

so with goodness; and the true Christian may be called both the happiest and the most miserable of men. Thus Paul, at one time, is caught up to heaven, and at another cries out "O, wretched man that I am!" Nor does the good man's misery always proceed from his remaining sin, but often simply from his temperament, and his position. God has taken him up to a high mountain, nearer himself, but this elevation has its penalties as well as its pleasures, and the Christian may cry as well as the poet,

> He that ascends to mountain tops, will find
> The highest peaks most-wrapped in clouds and snow.
> He that surpasses, or subdues mankind,
> Must look down on the hate of those below,
> Though high above the sun of glory glow,
> And far beneath the earth and ocean spread,
> Round him are icy rocks, and loudly blow
> Contending tempests on his naked head,
> And thus reward the toils which to these summits led.

Brown's error lay in the unguarded universality of his statement, "that a man's happiness has *nothing* to *do* with his nearness to God;" and the error of the other, in admitting no elements of discord in a man's mind apart from his quarrel with his Maker. This controversy, and some of its consequences, greatly annoyed poor Samuel Brown—the more, as a delicate state of health rendered him unusually sensitive.

The same cause somewhat lessened our pleasure in his visit to Dundee in the spring of 1850—his last, as it turned out, athough "little thought we 'twas his last." The old buoyancy of his spirit was considerably impaired, and his temper had suffered in some measure along with it. Indeed we wonder, on reflection, that it was not acerbated to a far keener degree. The savage onset of some of the Evangelical journals, the failure of Galileo, and the hope deferred of his incomplete and tantalising experiments—all combined with the incurable malady which had begun to prey on his vitals, to crush him to the dust, and nothing but his amazing elasticity and hopefulness, combined with the

fact that he had now a kind and soothing female companion—and that

> No more alone through the world's wilderness,
> Although he trod the paths of high intent
> He journeyed now; no more companionless,
> Where solitude is like despair, he went—

served to support him. He delivered in March the series of lectures he had given during the winter in Edinburgh to a select and enthusiastic audience in Dundee. It was on the History of Chemistry, and included lively sketches of the alchymists, and especially of that most brilliant of philosophical vagabonds—that magnificent impostor—parcel charlatan, parcel maniac, parcel genius—Paracelsus; of the early chymists, Becher and Stâhl, and of the later discoverers in the science, Lavoisier and Dalton. His manner in these lectures was more subdued than on former occasions—his language chaster, and his thought more matured—but the use of notes, to which the physicians had advised him, to keep down excitement, somewhat lessened the effect. In one lecture (on the atomic theory) he threw aside his MS., and gained a high triumph by the clearness, eloquence, energy, and grace with which he expounded a most complex and tenebrious theme. By his rapid manipulations, animated gestures, lively movements, explicit statements, and thrilling tones, he made the dry bones of an abstruse theory to live, and move, and dance in our sight, and extracted poetry as well as life from what in all other hands had been dull, if not disgusting. At the close of the last lecture, which was on Dalton, we recognised again the daring annihilator of the universe, as we had heard him on Friday the 7th of October, 1842. Seldom did we listen to such a peroration. The very pulse of the audience seemed suspended as he represented "*God literally creating the universe every moment.*" There was in all that lecture, too—at least to us, on reflection, there *seems* to have been—a certain pathetic tone, as if he were half conscious that he was to appear in this scene of his many triumphs no more, and as if some supernatural voice was sounding through his soul the words,

> Moriturus hos salutas.

He had probably many more intelligent audiences in other places than in Dundee, but by none was he welcomed with more uniform and unbounded enthusiasm. This he felt deeply, and used to say that he was never so proud of any approbation as of that of an humble mechanic, who had been noticed, as he was describ-

ing the annihilation of the universe, "to get pale and then flush, and then get pale and then flush again."

On, we think, Saturday, March 23, 1850, Brown left Dundee, as it proved, for ever, and, save for one night at Haddington, next September, where we heard him deliver a splendid speech on astronomy, and another night at Portobello in June, 1851, we never met him again. Of his later years we cannot speak, therefore, save by hearsay. They were years of great pain—of much spiritual and mental anxiety—of fitful literary effort—but years during which he seemed, it is said, "drawing nearer and nearer to God," and in which he became permanently what he had been at times in his life before, "a weaned child," submitting cheerfully, and not compulsorily, to the will of his Heavenly Father. Poor fellow! his was a sad fate. Stretched in midtime of his days on a bed of long-continued and hopeless anguish—death alone opening a gloomy gate for his egress—a thousand contemplated literary and scientific schemes surrounding his couch, and crying, "We be idle in the market-place, waiting for *thee* to hire us, for no one else has or can,"—it may seem wonderful that he did not curse the sun, and die, and it was only the divine grace which had stolen in through the rents of pain and disappointment, into his inmost being, which cheered and upheld him. What his ultimate creed as to its precise form was, we know not; but in spirit, and in the main elements of his belief, he became and he died a Christian. In his heart, we trust, he was always sound, although he had wandered far in intellect and imagination from the faith of his boyhood. He came back at last like a wearied sea-bird to his native nest, and slept in Jesus. It was on Saturday, September 20, 1856, that his deeply-exercised soul was dismissed from his sorely-wasted frame. He was in his fortieth year. It was one of the loveliest days of autumn, a day so beautiful that one might have desired to die on it, and breathed the wish, "O! that I had wings like a dove, that I might—along with the departing pinions of this glorious evening—flee away and be at rest," nay, that seemed fit to have been the last evening of earth's last autumn! Little thought we while taking our wonted Saturday afternoon stroll around the Law of Dundee, and enjoying a prospect *he* had often contemplated with delight along with us—the Firth of Tay, stretching from Carnoustie to Newburgh, and shining this day like a sea of glass mingled with fire—the cottages and sands of Broughty Ferry gleaming like silver—the fair valley of the Dighty winding up to meet the Carse of Gowrie

the fields of both being white unto harvest, and spotted here and there with sheaves—the bold Seidlaw summits on the north and north-east, and on the south and west the Lomonds of Fife, shooting up like columns of black marble into the glowing sky; —that sky itself, reposing over the scene like a variegated curtain of red and blue, and purple and yellow, with shafts of sunfire piercing masses of azure and gold, and falling like angelic smiles upon this and the other favoured spot; little thought we while gazing at this exquisite revelation of the loveliness of Nature, that our ancient friend, one of Nature's warmest worshippers and most fearless explorers, had that morning left the material universe behind him, and entered within its veil. The darkness of that night shut at once over Samuel Brown's deathbed, and over the prospects of the Scottish harvest—which became, like his sanguine hopes, a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow; and the rain of the next fortnight might, to a fanciful mind, seem tears for his death, and the wild and furious blasts of the equinox which followed, to be wailings for his early and inestimable loss.

Samuel Brown was certainly the most all-sided, ambidexter, elastic, Alcibiadean man we ever knew. Not the strongest or profoundest of men, he was one of the subtlest, and swiftest. There was a suppleness even in the movements of his body, particularly when performing his lecturing manipulations; you thought almost he was flying, or could do so if he had a mind. Certainly his soul and his lips had wings alike soft and vigorous. Some said, "He gives you the impression of a man who can do anything;" others, looking perhaps to the dispersion and uncertainty of his numerous faculties, and to his want of direct, masculine, Titanic force, whispered,—"He is the cleverest of men, but will never do anything very great." Both have been right,—the first class potentially, the other really; yet, if we grant that he has not effected any revolution in chemistry, or written any literary work worthy of the name, let us remember his painful obstructions, through poverty, non-appreciation, the prejudices of the scientific, and at one time, of the religious classes, his long ill-health, and premature removal. His native faculties were almost universal in their range. He had a comprehensive and keenly penetrating intellect, a brilliant imagination, great command, if not thorough compactness of language, lively wit, gleams of racy humour, wide sympathies, and warm enthusiasm. His culture was rather extensive than profound; and yet, no subject could be introduced on which he

seemed quite at fault. This arose, not so much from his reading as from the happy instinctive art by which he perceived the *relations* of all branches of knowledge to each other, and by knowing one or two intimately, learned to know all the rest well. There was probably, in his mind, a tendency to hasty generalisation, and too often has it been said, he seemed in his chemical researches to twist his facts into accommodation to the "foregone conclusion" of his hypothesis. Great as was the disparity in size and strength, both of body and mind, between him and Professor Wilson, there were certain resemblances, especially in their combination of originality and mimetic power, of sincerity, and of subtlety, of an enthusiasm ever threatening to faint away in the arms of fun, and of a fun ever ready to stretch out the wings of enthusiasm, of an earnestness which was sometimes mistaken for jest, and of a jest which sometimes ended, if it did not begin in earnest. To Goethe, also, he bore a certain resemblance, in multiplicity of powers and accomplishments; and in the manner in which, as he himself says of the German, "he *wrestled* with every branch of human knowledge," and said to it, as Jacob to the angel, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me,"—but was of a far warmer, franker, more genial and more religious temperament.

His versatility did him harm as well as good. In the first place it sometimes threatened to disturb the entireness of his consecration to scientific research. He had not, after all, given his *whole* soul, and mind, and strength to chemistry; and seemed at times haunted with suspicions that it was not his real vocation, although he chased these away, and chained himself to the crucible more firmly than ever. It led him, secondly, to be accused of levity, or insincerity, of *being* the actor, and only putting *on* the prophet and the poet. And he had at times, about him, a motley garb and a light mimetic aspect, but there was a deep enthusiasm behind it. He might, like Pan of old, wear a leopard-skin, which, till ill-health came, he was not able or willing to change; but was it not like Pan's, "powdered with stars?" Had he been a mere mimic, why did he not become an actor or rhetorical preacher, or fashionable novelist, instead of seeking the favours of science, the severest mistress on earth? No! playful as the aurora, he was earnest as the stars!

Whatever may be thought of Brown's success, or even of his capabilities for scientific discovery, let us admit the grandeur of his idea, and the sincerity of the effort he made to realise it. He strove to unite the fidianistic and poetic qualities of the *genuine*

alchymists, with the analytic sagacity, the patient and loyal *subjection* to Nature distinguishing our modern chymists. He thought, that in ancient alchymy, like lightning in vapour, there lurked a deep-piercing and far-pervading truth. He was an ardent searcher into the abyss of Nature; he strove to take her in her *form*. He followed her into those dim points which shoot out like promontories upon the blind ocean of Nothing. He tried to compel speech from her atoms, and make them assert their dignity, beside their overgrown brethren, the stars. He sought to *produce* and expand the unity of the atom-point, till it included in it, all substances and sciences, all worlds and firmaments. Others have aspired to look at Being from above —from the centre—from the great *Throne;* he tried to look at it from below—from the tiny *footstool* of the minutest subdivision of dust.

Whether the path he opened up in this direction shall be successfully followed by others is doubtful. Perhaps it is an attempt too high for man, an attempt to stand behind the great Demiurge at his work. Perhaps, even were the object gained, it might teach us very little spiritual truth. Nature seems, on such subjects, leaning down in despair and murmuring, "It is not in me," like a beautiful female holding to the thirsty traveller an emptied water-urn. We have a more sure word of prophecy in the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and had Brown lived he might have done more good by his testimony to its truth, than by either his researches into science, or by his achievements in literature. We have, in the above remarks, more or less fully spoken of Brown as a writer, lecturer, conversationist, chemist, and man; there is just one other aspect in which we would glance a moment at him ere we close—it is as a correspondent. His letters were delightful outcomes of his mind and genius, free, fluent, easy, varied, funny, riotous even at times; and yet how eloquent in their earnestness, how bold in their speculations, how vivid in their descriptions, how wise in their counsels, and how warm and friendly in their spirit! They were just his conversation in its happiest vein, transferred to note-paper, and in looking at those letters of his we possess, we seem to see at our feet handfuls of a heart, which is now cold in the sepulchre, and we cannot refrain from moistening them with tears.

We linger as we quit the theme, the treatment of which has given us great, though pensive, pleasure. We can hardly, at times, realise the fact that Samuel Brown is dead. We had not

seen him for five years, and then he seemed so full of life. And can it be that that bounding step, that animated eye, those quivering, talking, laughing lips, that bearing so springy, that tongue so eloquent, are now all massed up in a little heap of dust, and for ever crippled and quenched? No! not for ever. "We shall meet again," in some "mild sphere;" let us trust to renew an intimacy that was interrupted, although not destroyed, and to mingle joys rarer than any even of those exquisite pleasures which we derived from friendship, mutual confidence, and an admiration common to both, of Nature, literature, eloquence, and poetry.

THOMAS CARLYLE[1]

THOMAS CARLYLE is the truest Diogenes of these times. Pushed aside by the strong hand of a peculiar genius into a corner, he has thence marked and remarked strangely, angularly, yet truly, upon man and the universe; and to that corner men are now beginning to flock, and the tub is towering into an oracle, and those rugged flame-words are fast becoming law! In the course of his career, his mind has gone through two different phases. In the first, he was little more than the chief interpreter between the German and the English mind; in the second, he has "shot upwards like a pyramid of fire," into a gigantic original. In the first, he was only a distinguished member of the *corps literaire;* in the second, he has started from the ranks, and become a separate and independent principality in the kingdom of letters. We propose to include both those aspects in our notice.

It is a well-known saying of Jean Paul Richter, that, while the French have the dominion of the land, and the English of the sea, to the Germans belongs the empire of the air; they inhabit "cloudland, gorgeous land." Repelled from earth by the flat and dreary prospects of their country, they have taken refuge, now in the abysses of infinity, and now in the abysses of their own strange and speculative intellects. Their poetry, their philosophy, and their religion are all dreams; scientifically constructed, indeed, and gorgeously coloured, but still dreams of the wildest and most mystic character. These peculiarities they have carried, not merely into their romances, epics, and psychological treatises, but into their books of science; their practical works, nay, for aught we know, their very spelling-books are tinged by the same hue, and, perhaps, like the primer of the unfortunate schoolmaster, commemorated by Dr. Johnson, dedicated to the universe! Intermixed with such singularities, which stamp a cloudy character upon the literature of Germany, we need not, at this time of day, dilate upon its conspicuous merits; its depths, its truth, its splendour of imagination; its fine blending of the romantic and the every-day in sentiment, and of grandeur and simplicity in style; its

[1] From *A Third Gallery of Literary Portraits*, 1845.

reverent fearlessness, or its infinite variety. Nor need we enlarge on its principal writers: the strong simplicity of Lessing; the "burning frore" of Bürger; the mellow diffusion of Klopstock; the voluptuous grace and laughing devil of Wieland; Schlegel's aspiring æsthetics; Schiller's high-wrought enthusiasm; Goethe's profound calm, like the light of sculpture, or of snow; and the tumultuous glories of style and image, the warmth of all-embracing charity, the soft, cheerful piety, the boundless fancy, the rambling, riotous energy, which glistened in the eye, reigned in the heart, and revelled on the page, of Jean Paul Richter, that German of the Germans, the most perfect specimen of the powers and peculiarities of that country, which he loved so dearly.

There was a time when, if simple and humble folks like ourselves had talked in this style, we should instantly have been ranked with the Germans themselves, at the foot of the gamut of existence, or rather, on the frontier line which separates the reasonable from the insane. Who has *changé tout cela?* Who has redeemed Germans, and the admirers of the German mind, from the coarse stigmas which had been so long affixed to their names? Who has bridged across the gulf which divided us from the huge continent of their literature? Thomas Carlyle, in his first character as translator and illustrator of the German poetic sages. Not that he did it by his single arm: he was anticipated by Coleridge, and strongly backed, if not preceded by De Quincey, Moir, and others; but, notwithstanding, that German literature is no longer a sealed book, but an open fountain, and that German intellect has been at length fairly appreciated among us, we believe to be mainly owing to his persevering and undaunted efforts. And to this end, his very errors, and exaggerations, and over-estimates, and too obvious emulation of some of the faults of his favourites, have contributed.

Carlyle is a Scottish German: he has grafted on a strong original stock of Scottish earnestness, simplicity, shrewdness, and humour, much of the mysticism, exaggeration, and eccentricity of his adopted country. Even though he had never read a page of the Teutonic grammar, he would have been distinguished as a man of original powers, profound sincerity, and indomitable perseverance. But, having studied and swam, for years together, in the sea of German learning, like a leviathan, he has become a kind of literary monster, German above and Scottish below. The "voice is Jacob's, the hands are Esau's." He is a hybrid. The main tissue of his mind is homely worsted;

but he has dyed it in the strangest colours, derived from Weimar and Bayreuth. Endued by nature with a "strong in-kneed soul," and fitted to be a prose Burns, he has become a British Richter. We have sometimes doubted if he did not *think in German*. Assuredly, he writes in it, uses its idioms, practises its peculiarities of construction; not merely defends, but exemplifies its most daring liberties, and spreads his strong wing over its glaring defects. Although possessed of undoubted originality, he long contented himself with being a gigantic echo-cliff to the varied notes of the German lyre, rendering back its harsh discords, as well as its soft and soul-like sounds. And here lies at once the source of his defects and his merits. One who is unacquainted with German authors, reads Carlyle with the utmost amazement: he is so utterly different from every other writer; his unmeasured sentences; his irregular density; his electric contrasts; his startling asseverations; his endless repetitions; the levity in which his most solemn and serious statements seem to swim; the air of mild, yet decisive scorn, with which he tosses about his thoughts, and characters, and the incidents of his story; the unearthly lustre at which he shows his shifting panoramas; his peculiar, and patched-up dialect; the singular terms and terminations which he uses, in unscrupulous abundance; the far and foreign strain of his allusions and associations; the recondite profundity of his learning; and those bursts of eloquent mysticism which alternate with yet wilder bursts of uncontrollable mirth and fuliginous irony,—reproduce an "altogetherness" of impression exceedingly startling. But, to one acquainted with German, the mystery is explained. Some, at least, of the peculiarities we have mentioned, are seen to be those of a whole literature, not of a solitary *littérateur;* and he who laughs at Carlyle must be prepared to extend his derision to the sum and substance of German genius. Still we doubt, along with Johnson, Foster, and critics of equal name, if any human understanding has a right to form, whether by affectation, or imitation, or translation, a dialect entirely and ostentatiously singular. A peculiar diction, it is true, has been considered by some one of the immunities of intellectual sovereignty; but he who adopts a uniformly uncommon mode of enunciating his ideas, and, still more, he who transplants his style from a foreign country, does it at his peril, subjects himself to ugly and unjust charges, injures his popularity and influence, and must balance the admiration of the initiated few, with the neglect or disgust of the ignorant or malignant many.

But the defects to which we have referred, being chiefly of style and manner, rarely of substance, and never of spirit, form but a feeble counterpoise to his merits; his "pictorial omnipotence;" his insight into the motives and minds of men; his art of depicting character, often by one lightning word; his sardonic and savage humour; his intense hatred of the false, and love of the true; his bursts of indignant declamation and spiritual pathos; his sympathies with all power which is genuine; all genius which is unaffected, and all virtue which is merciful; his philosophy, at once mystic and homely,—obscure, indeed, in its premises, but most practical in its results; and, above all, that almost religious earnestness, which casts over all his writings the shadow of deep seriousness. We know not what Carlyle's creed may be, but we honour his reverence for the religious principle in man. No one has a deeper sense of the Infinite and of the Eternal; no one has knelt with more solemn awe, under the soul-quelling shadow of the universe, or looked up with a more adoring eye to the "silent immensity and palace of the Eternal, of which our sun is but a porch-lamp." No one has expressed a higher reverence for the "Worship of Sorrow;" and it was "worth a thousand homilies" to hear him, as we were privileged to do, talking for four miles of moonlit road, with his earnest, sagacious voice, of religion, baring, ever and anon, his head, as if in worship, amid the warm, slumberous August air. His intimacy with such men as Irving, Thomas Erskine, and Scott of Woolwich, is itself a voucher for his sincerity. And who that has read his spiritual autobiography in *Sartor*, whether he adopt or understand his conclusions or not, can resist admiration for the intense fervour, and the awful struggle discovered in that immortal search?

A singular change, indeed, has, within these few years, taken place in the religious sentiments of literary men. Five-and-twenty, or even fifteen years ago, what was the spectacle? Literature and faith at variance; the leading review of the country steeped so strongly in a cold materialistic scepticism, that pious men took it up with hesitation, and laid it down with disgust; the great body of *littérateurs* either the fierce and open enemies, or the secret and insidious assailants of revealed truth; and, on the other hand, the religious public loathing that literature of which Bryon and the Edinburgh reviewers were at the head, anathematising its idols, and carefully excluding its style, and spirit, and sentiment, from the most distant contact with their own productions and periodicals. 'Twas a

divorce, or rather exorcisation; the spirit of religion having been cast out of literature, the religious revenged themselves by casting out the spirit of literature from religion. The consequence was, as might have been foreseen, the production of a brilliant but unbaptised science, a splendid but Satanic poetry, a witty but wicked criticism on the one side, and of a feeble, fanatical, illiberal, intolerant, religious literature on the other. Thus, both parties suffered from their separation; but religion most. Such *was* the case: it is very different now. Advances towards a reconciliation have been made. Men of letters, in general, have dropped their animosities to religion, and, if they have not all yet given in their adherence to any particular form of Christianity, they are seeking truth, and have turned their faces in the proper direction. The reviews now, without exception, speak of religion with affection or respect. That sneering, cold-blooded, Gibbonic style, once the rage, has withered out of our literature. Meanwhile, we admit, that the religious community is not reciprocating good understanding so fully as we would wish. There is still too much of jealousy and fear in the aspect with which they regard the literature and science of the day. Why should it be so? Why should two powers, so similar, not interchange amicable offices? Why should two chords, placed so near in the Æolian harp of creation, not sound in harmony? Why should two sunbeams, both derived from the same bright eternal source, not mingle their radiance?

But to return to Carlyle: the first light in which he appeared before the public, was as a translator. He is more faithful in his versions than Coleridge; but inferior in the resources of style, and in that irrepressible originality which was ever sparkling out from the poet, communicating new charms to the beautiful, new terrors to the dreadful, and adding graces which his author never gave. If Coleridge must be confessed to have plagiarised from the German, it ought not to be forgotten that he returned what he stole with interest, and has, in translating, improved, beautified, and filled up the ideal of Schiller.

Besides *Wilhelm Meister* (a work which, by the way, contains, according to Carlyle and Edward Irving, the best character of Christ ever written), he has published specimens of the German novels, accompanied by critical notices, which, though inferior to his after works in power and peculiarity, are quite equal, we think, to anything he has written, in subtlety of discrimination, and superior in simplicity and idiomatic beauty of language. Carlyle's style was then not so deeply tinged with its idiosyn-

cratic qualities, and in the *mare magnum* of Teutonic literature he had only as yet dipped his shoe. He was then obliged to conform more to the tastes and understandings of his readers. Ever since, although his thinking has been getting more independent and profound, and his eloquence more earnest and overpowering, his diction has certainly not improved.

His "Miscellanies," recently collected, appeared principally in the *Edinburgh, Foreign,* and *Foreign Quarterly Reviews.* Though full of faults, and all a-blaze with the splendid sins of their author's diction, they are nevertheless masterpieces of wit and wisdom, of strength and brilliance; the crushed essence of thought is in them, and the sparkling foam of fancy; and in their truthfulness, enthusiasm, and barbaric vigour, they leave on us the impression of something vast, abysmal, obscure, and formidable. Indeed, were a mountain to speak, or, to use his own bold language, "were the rocks of the sea to burst silence, and to tell what they had been thinking on from eternity," we imagine they would speak in some such rugged and prodigious style. Amid his many papers in *The Edinburgh,* we prefer his first on "Jean Paul," dear, dreaming, delirious Jean Paul, who used to write in the same poor apartment where his mother and sisters cooked, and his pigeons cooed, and they all huddled; who was seldom seen on the street without a flower on his breast; who, when once he visited Schiller, dressed fantastically in green, complained, poor fellow, that he frowned him off from his brow, "as from a precipice;" who taught wisdom after the maddest fashion yet known among men,—now recreating under the "cranium of a giantess," and now selecting from the "papers of the devil," —but whose works are at once the richest and the deepest in the German language, glittering above like the spires of Golconda, and concealing below treasures sumless as the mines of Peru. The article excited at the time (1826) a sensation. Not merely was it a splendid piece of writing, but it was the first which fairly committed the *Review* in favour of that German taste and genius which it had been reviling from its commencement; the first thunderbolt to the old regime of criticism, and the first introduction to the English public of the name and character and writings of one of the most extraordinary men which an age, fertile in real and in pretended prodigies, has hitherto produced.

Next to this we love his panegyric on Burns, written as he sojourned in the neighbourhood of that district which derives its glory and its shame from the memory of the great poet. We

recalled it keenly to memory as, in his own company, we gazed with deep emotion upon Burns's house in Dumfries,—the scene of the dread tragedy which was transacted there while the still gold of an autumnal sunset was gilding its humble roof, and touching the window through which had so often rolled and glowed the ardent eye of the poet—the poet of whom Scotia, while "pale" with grief at his errors, is proud to ecstasy as she repairs to his honoured grave—whose tongue was only a produced heart, and whose heart loved all that he saw, from the sun to the sickle which he grasped in his hot hand; from the star of his Mary to the mousie running from his ploughshare—whose soul, by the side of a sounding wood, "rose to Him that walketh on the wings of the wind"—who, "walking in glory and joy behind his plough upon the mountain side," generally drew that joy from nature, and that glory from song,—whose dust, in its tomb, turns and shivers at the name "drunkard," which mean, or malignant, or prejudiced, or misinformed men have vainly sought to inscribe upon it—over whose follies and sins, all of them occasional, and none habitual or inveterate, let a mantle be drawn, warm as his own heart, bright as his own genius, and ample as his own understanding! Carlyle, like Wilson, always rises above himself when he speaks of Burns. And the secret is, that both see and love the man, as well as admire the poet. Altogether, indeed, Burns has been fortunate in his critics, although Jeffrey did try to trip up his heels, and Wordsworth made but a clumsy attempt to break his fall, forgetting that such an attempt was needless, for, falling at the plough, where could he light but on the fresh, soft, strong earth, and how could he rise but in the attitude of an Antæus?

His paper on the "Signs of the Times," contains an exposition of the difference between a mechanical and a dynamical age—ingenious, but hardly just. We wonder that a man of Carlyle's calibre can chime in with the cant against mechanism, raised by "mechanical salt butter rogues." Men, it is true, nowadays, use more machines than they did, but are they therefore more machines themselves? Was James Watt an automaton? Has the Press become less an object of wonder or fear since it was worked by steam? Imagination, even, and mechanism are good friends. How sublime the stoppage of a mail as the index of rebellion! Luther's Bible was printed by a machine. The organ, as it heaves up earth's only fit reply to the thunder, is but a machine. A mechanical age! What do its steam carriages

convey? Is it not newspapers, magazines, reviews, poems? Are they not in this way the conductors of the fire of intellect and passion? Is not mechanism just the short-hand of poetry? Thomas Carlyle fears that the brood hen will yet be superseded! We deem this fear superfluous, and for our parts, never expect to sup on steam chickens, or breakfast on steam-laid eggs.

His last paper in *The Edinburgh* (save one on Ebenezer Elliott) was entitled "Characteristics," and of its author at least was eminently characteristic. It might, in fact, be proposed as a *Pons Asinorum* to all those who presume to approach the study of this remarkable man. It adds all the peculiarities of his philosophy to all the peculiarities of his style, and the result is a bit of pure unmixed Carlylism, which many of his admirers dote on as a fragment of heaven-born philosophy, and his detractors defame as a slice of chaos, but which we value principally as a revelation of the man. Whatever were its merits, it proved too strong and mystic food for the ordinary readers of *The Edinburgh*, and led, we have heard, to his withdrawal from its arena.

At an earlier date than this appeared his *Life of Schiller*, a stately, rotund, and eloquent composition, of which its author is said now to be a little ashamed. We can see no more reason for this than for the preference which he since habitually gives to Goethe above the author of *The Robbers*.

We retain, too, a lively memory of a paper on Diderot, embodying a severe and masterly dissection of that brilliant charlatan—of another, containing a *con amore* account of Mirabeau—of various articles on Goethe—and of a paper on Sir Walter Scott, where we find his familiar features shown us in a new and strange light, as if in the gleam of an apothecary's evening window.

To *Fraser's Magazine* he has contributed much—among other things, a review of Croker's *Boswell*, *The Diamond Necklace*, etc. In the print of the "Fraserians," his face was not forgotten, though, amid the boisterous revelry, and waggish worldly countenances around, it seemed woefully out of place. We asked ourselves as we gazed, what business has that still, earnest, spiritual face there? And we put the same query still more strongly about two others included in the same scene—Coleridge, with his great gray misty eyes, like an embodied abstraction; and Edward Irving, with his black locks tangled in gorgonic confusion, and in his eye the glare of insanity contending with the fire of coming death!

In *Fraser* also (much to the annoyance of a sapient nobleman, who asked the publisher when that "stupid series of articles by the tailor were to be done?") appeared the first draught of *Sartor Resartus*. We have only of late become acquainted with this singular production, but few books have ever moved us more. It turned up our whole soul like a tempest. It reminded us of nothing so much as of Bunyan's *Autobiography*. With a like dreadful earnestness does Carlyle describe his pilgrimage from the "Everlasting No" of darkness and defiance—his City of Destruction—on to that final Beulah belief, that "Blessedness is better than happiness," which he calls the "Everlasting Yea," and on which, as on a pillow, he seems disposed to rest his head against eternity. In writing it, he has written, not his own life alone, but the spiritual history of many thinking and sincere men of the time. Whoever has struggled with doubts and difficulties almost to strangling—whoever has tossed for nights upon his pillow, and in helpless wretchedness cried out with shrieks of agony to the God of heaven—whoever has covered with his cloak a Gehenna of bitter disappointment and misery, and walked out, nevertheless, firm, and calm, and silent, among his fellow-men—whoever has mourned for "all the oppressions which are done under the sun," and been "mad for the sight of his eyes that he did see"—whoever has bowed down at night upon his pillow, in the belief that he was the most wretched and God-forsaken of mortal men—whoever has felt all the "wanderer in his soul," and a sense of the deepest solitude, even when mingling in the business and the crowded thoroughfares of his kind—whoever at one time has leaned over the precipices of Mount Danger, and at another adventured a step or two on that dreary path of destruction, "which led to a wide field full of dark mountains, where he stumbled and fell, and rose no more;" and at a third, walked a gloom amid the glooms of the valley and the shadow of death—whoever has at last attained, not peace, not happiness, not assurance, but child-like submission, child-like faith, and meek-eyed "blessedness"—let him approach, and study, and press to his breast, and carry to his bed, and bedew with his tears, *Sartor Resartus*, and bless the while its brave and true-hearted author. But whoever has not had a portion of this experience, let him pass on—the book has nothing to say to him, and he has nothing to do with the book. It is above him like a star—it is apart from him like a spirit. Let him laugh at it if he will—abuse it if he will—call it German trash, transcendental Neologism, if he will—only

let him not read it. Its sweet and solemn "Evangel"—its deep pathos—its earnestness—its trenchant and terrible anatomy of not the least singular or least noble of human hearts—its individual passages and pictures, unsurpassed in power and grandeur, as that of the Night Thoughts of Teufelsdrockh, when he sat in his high attic, "alone with the stars" the description of his appearance on the North Cape, "behind him all Europe and Asia fast asleep, and before him the silent immensity and palace of the eternal, to which our sun is but a porch lamp"—the discovery to him of the glories of Nature, as he felt for the "first time that she was his mother and divine"—his wanderings in vain effort to "escape from his own shadow"—the picture of the power and mystery of symbols—with all this, what has he, the reader of *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *The New Monthly* to do? Let him go, however, and chuckle over the sketch of the "worst of all possible universities," Edinburgh, as Carlyle found it, and its picture of the two sects,—of dandies and poor Irish slaves. *These* he may comprehend and enjoy, but the other!—

We like his *Lectures on Heroes and Hero-Worship,* principally as a specimen of his conversational powers. They are just his recorded talk—the eloquent droppings of his mind. To them we could refer all who have never met him, and who would wish to form some idea of his conversation—the richest and strongest essence we ever took in withal. They were delivered to a very select audience, including six bishops, many clergymen, fashionable ladies, and the *élite* of the literature of London. The lecturer appeared at first somewhat timid, irresolute, bowed down, whether before the weight of the subject, or the imposing aspect of the audience, but soon recovered his self-possession; gradually, in the fine old Puritanic phrase, became "enlarged;" and was enabled, in firm, manly, flowing, almost warbling accents, to utter the truth and the feeling which were in him. The lectures themselves contain many "strange matters." How he heats the old mythologies, and expiscates the meaning which lay within their cloudy wrappages! How he paints "Canopus shining down upon the wild Ishmaelitish man, with its blue spiritual brightness, like an eye from the depths of immensity!" What desperate battle he does for that "deep-hearted son of the wilderness, with the black, beaming eyes," Mahomet, till you say with Charles Lamb, who, after listening to a long harangue in defence of him of Mecca, by an enthusiastic youth, asked as they were taking their hats to leave the

house, "Where have you put your turban?" And how thoroughly does he sympathise with the severe and saturnine graces of Dante,—with Shakspere's kind-hearted laughter,—with Johnson's rugged honesty,—with Rousseau's fantastic earnestness,—with Napoleon's apocalyptic revelation of the power and mystery of force—and above all, with Cromwell's iron-handed and robust unity of purpose. The great moral fault of the book is, that he idolises energy and earnestness in themselves, and apart from the motives in which they move, and the ends to which they point.

Chartism and *Past and Present* are valuable as revealing many of the darker symptoms of our political and social disease. The remedy is nowhere to be found within them. It is characteristic of Carlyle, that he not unfrequently tantalises his reader by glimpses, rather than satisfies him by distinct masses of thought. Does a difficulty occur? He shows every ordinary mode of solution to be false, but does not supply the true. Is a character to be described? He often, after darting scorn upon all common conceptions of it, leaves it to shift for itself, or only indicates his opinion. Why is this? Is he like Horne Tooke, who used to start puzzling questions at the Sunday meetings of his friends, and deferred their solution, that he might have the pleasure of keeping them in suspense till a week had revolved? Or is it, that he is only endowed with an energy of destruction, and is rather a tornado to overturn, than an architect to build? One message, at any rate, has been given him above all other men to deliver,—that of human ignorance. He is the prophet at once of the power and the weakness, the greatness and the littleness of man. Fixing his foot firmly on the extreme limit of what man *kens* and *cans*, he tells him in one oracular voice what he kens and what he kens not, nor ever in this world shall ken—what he cans and what he cans not, nor ever on this side eternity can. "Know thyself! thyself thou wilt never know—know thy work, which were more to the purpose." "Know God! it will take thee, I suspect, to eternity to learn even the rudiments of this awful knowledge; more to the point to know what God bids thee do, and to do it." "Know Nature! never! thou mayest babble about electricity, for instance, but what is it? whence comes it? whither goes it? Thou canst not tell; but thou canst tell how to elevate thy lightning rod, and how to make the terrible thing, though all the while it remain a mystery to thee, to trickle along it tamely, as a woman's tear." Thus we paraphrase the avowed purpose of this prophet of the

"Age of Tools." It is, as with the precision and insight of a visitor from another world, to declare the business of man's life, and to settle the boundaries of man's understanding.

The French Revolution, a History, as his largest, and in every way his greatest work, we have reserved for a more lengthened criticism. We must premise that our remarks concern it merely as a literary production, not as a historical work. We are not qualified to decide as to the accuracy of its matter-of-fact details. But we flatter ourselves that we are not unable to appreciate its merit, as the moralising of a great and peculiar mind on the most singular series of transactions that earth ever saw — the most enormous "world-whirlpool" which ever boiled, and raved, and cast its bloody spray far up into the black hollow of night! The first thing that struck us about it, was the strangeness of the titles of its chapters. All of them are entitled, not, as in the common way, from the principal event recorded therein, but from some one word or phrase in the beginning, middle, or end, which has hit the writer's fancy, and given him an outlet for his peculiar sarcasm, such as "Astræa Redux;" "Astræa Redux without cash;" "Flame Picture;" "Danton no weakness;" "Go down to." If this be affectation, thought we, it is a new and a very clever kind of it. The best way of seeing the force and fun of these titles, is by reading them by themselves right down—no shrinking—from "Louis the Well-beloved" to "Vendemiare." We remember a heroic youth, who stated his intention of reading all Gibbon's notes apart from the text, for the sake of the learning crushed and crammed into them. The task of reading Carlyle's titles were easier, and far more amusing. Our next subject of wonder was the style, which reads as though the writer had sat down deliberately to caricature his former works. It could only be adequately described by itself. Fuliginous-flaming, prose-poetic, mock-heroic-earnest, Germanic-Scotch, colloquial-chaotic, satiric-serious, luminous-obscure—all these epithets are true, and equally true of it, and of it alone. We read part of it to a person the other day, who, at every other sentence, cried out, "The man's mad." We read on, till we shook him soul and body by its power. We noticed, too, concerning this same strange style, that it is a style now, at all events, necessary to the man's mind, and no more affected than Jean Paul's, Johnson's, and Milton's, and like theirs may be called the "hurley-burley nonsense of a giant, not to be used with impunity by any one less"—that it is a style, indeed, defying

imitation, except in its glaring defects—and that on all great occasions it rises above its faults, throws them off as men do garments in a mortal struggle, and reaches a certain purity, and displays a naked nerve, and produces a rugged music. We observed, too, that it is a style in intense keeping with the subject. Deep calleth unto deep. Demogorgon paints chaos. A turbid theme requires a turbid style. To write the story of the French Revolution demanded a pen of a cloudy and colossal character, which should despise petty beauties, and lay iron grasp on the more prominent points. How would the whirling movements, the giddy and dream-like mutations, the gigantic virtues, and the black atrocities of intoxicated France bear to be represented in neat and classical language, in measured and balanced periods, in the style of a state paper, or in the fripperies of brilliant antithesis? Who would like to see the dying gladiator or the Laocoon clothed in the mode of the day? No! show us them naked, or if ornaments be added, let them be severe and stony, in keeping with the terrible original. So Carlyle's style, from its very faults, its mistiness, its repetitions, its savage boldness, its wild humour blent with yet wilder pathos, its encircling air of ridicule, its startling abruptness, itself a revolution, is fitted better than the simple style of Scott, or the brilliant invective of Burke, or the unhealthy heat and laboured splendour of Hazlitt, to mirror in its unequal but broad surface, the scenery and circumstances of the wondrous era. Its great sin as a narrative is, that it presumes too much on the reader's previous acquaintance with the details of the period, and deals more in glancing allusion than in direct statement. We noticed, too, and felt its enthralling interest. Once you are accustomed to the manner and style, you will find no historian who casts stronger ligaments of interest around you. We have heard an instance of this. Sir William Hamilton got hold of the book about three in the afternoon. He began to read, and could not lay it aside till four in the morning—thirteen hours at a stretch. We know nothing like this since the story of Sir Joshua Reynolds reading the *Life of Savage* in a country inn, standing till his arm was stiff, cold, and glued to the mantel-piece. Like the suction of a whirlpool, the book draws you in, whether you will or no. Its very faults, like scars on the face of a warrior, contribute to rivet your attention. And even to those familiar with the events of the period, everything seems new in the glare of Carlyle's savage genius. We noticed, too, its epic character. It has been well called the epic poem, rather than the *History of the*

Revolution. The author, ere writing it, seems to have read over, not Thucydides, but Homer, and truly the old Homeric fire burns in its every chapter. Sometimes it is mock-heroic rather than epic, and reminds us more of Fielding's introductory chapters, or the better parts of Ossian, than of Melesigenes. But its spirit is epic, its figures are epic, its epithets are epic, and above all, its repetitions are quite in Homer's way. The description of Louis's flight is a fine episode, kindling in parts into highest poetry, as when he says, "O Louis, this all around thee is the great slumbering earth, and overhead the great watchful Heaven. But right ahead, the great north-east sends up evermore his gray brindled dawn; from dewy branch, birds here and there, with short deep warble, salute the coming sun. Stars fade out, and galaxies, street lamps in the city of God. The universe, O my brother, is flinging wide its portals for the levee of the great high king." And though the age of epics be gone, yet if histories like those of Carlyle take their place, we can have no reason to mourn their departure. Like Chapman, he "speaks out loud and bold." He tramples upon petty beauties, and the fear of petty blemishes, and the shame of leaving a sentence unpolished, and the pride of rounding off a period, and all the miserable millineries of an artificial style. His strength, as that of every genuine epic poet should, does not lie in the elegance and polish of particular parts, so much as in the grand general result and merit of the whole. One bad or middling line is unpardonable in a sonnet or epigram, but a hundred such cannot hurt the effect of a lengthened poem. So Carlyle, leaving minuteness of finish to the Lilliputians of literature—to the authors of single sermons, short articles, etc.—contents himself with throwing forth from his "fire-bosom" a gigantic *tout ensemble.* Undoubtedly, were he to combine delicacy with energy of execution, Titanic power with Pygmæan polish, he were a far more perfect and popular writer. But how few have exhibited an instance of such a combination. Not Shakspere, not Eschylus, hardly Milton—perhaps, if we except Dante and Goethe, not one. Few great writers are fine writers (understanding this in the sense of finished), and few fine writers are great. They who have much to say care less for the mode of saying it, and though the most perfect specimens of writing, after all, occur in their pages, they occur through a sort of chance—they are there because their writers could not help it, not because they wished to be especially fine. Jeremy Taylor was not a fine writer, nor Burke, nor is Wilson; yet,

who would prefer to them, with all their mannerism and carelessness, the writings of Blair or Alison, though they be, in point of style, almost faultless monsters? We, for our part, prefer soul to style, and like rough diamonds far better than polished pebbles. We noticed, again, its tone of strange charity. This principle, even while passing through the bloody chaos and monster-gallery of the worst period of the Revolution, never forsakes him. Is the brand-mark of universal reprobation on any brow? That brow, be sure, he stoops down and kisses with a pitying and pardoning affection. For Danton he has an enthusiastic admiration; for Robespierre a slight but marked penchant; and even for Marat, a lurking tenderness. The world generally has set these men down for monsters, or, in the mildest point of view, madmen, and classed them in that corner of the moral museum railed in for *lusus naturae*. But here comes Thomas Carlyle to this abhorred and shunned corner, snuffing the tainted air, wondering at the singular formations, nay, reclaiming them to the catalogue of men. "Robespierre's poor landlord, the cabinet-maker in the Rue St. Honoré, loved him; his brother died for him. May God be merciful to him and to us!" Now, for our part, we like this spirit, were it for nothing but its rarity; and, like Carlyle, we are no believers in monstrous births. We believe that millions of respectable and selfish men of the world have in them the elements of Marats, Robespierres, and Neros. We hear every day instances of petty tyranny, and minute and malignant cruelty, which, to our mind, let down a fiercer and farther light into the blackness of our depraved nature than a myriad of massacres done, not in cold, but in boiling blood, amid the heavings of a moral earthquake, and under the canopy of revolutionary night. The longer we live, the less we need extreme cases, to convince us that the heart is desperately wicked, and that he who has sounded the grave, the ocean, the darkest mountain tarn, cannot fathom the bottomless blackness of his own heart. We do not then join with Carlyle's Edinburgh reviewer, in his grave rebuke of his charity; yet, perhaps, it is carried too far sometimes. Perhaps it is expressed in a tone of too much levity, and the *sang froid* he assumes is rather Satanic; perhaps for a mere man too lofty a point of view is assumed; perhaps a hatred of cant, profound as the profound thing itself (cant is abysmal) has seduced him into a minor cantilena of his own. We have amused ourselves in imagining how he would treat some of the Roman emperors; and have fancied him swallowing Nero,

after a considerable gulp; saying civil things of Heliogabalus; and finding a revelation on the tip of Domitian's bodkin, wherewith he amused his *ennui* in transfixing flies! Seriously, however, we like this spirit. It reminds us, not unpleasantly, of Charles Lamb, who, we are told, never thoroughly loved a man till he had been thrown at his door, singed and blackened by the fire of general contempt and execration. This spirit, we cannot help thinking, contrasts well with that of Dr. Croly. In talking of the actors in the French Revolution, he often uses language unworthy of a Christian minister. He speaks of them uniformly in a tone of the most savage and truculent fury. This in a contemporary like Burke, was excusable; but now that the men are dead, and have received their verdict from the lips of Eternal Justice, why do more than add a solemn "Amen" to the sentence, whatever it be, which has fixed their destiny? It may be too much in Carlyle to breathe a sigh over a dead ruffian, who died amid the roar of liberated France, and the curses of mothers and children; but of two extremes it is decidedly the better.

We noticed, too, that his prime favourites, next to Charlotte Corday and Madame Roland, whom every body admires, are Mirabeau and Danton. His style rises whenever he speaks of these gigantic men. Nor do we wonder, for surely they tower titanically above all the actors in that scene of "cinders and blood." Strong and loud must be the steps, which, like theirs, become audible amid an earthquake. Others appear passive in the scene, whirled about like straws in the vortex. But revolution is their element. They alone can ride upon its wild waters; no vulgar democrats are they; no petty, peddling retail revolutionists; they resemble rather the Pandemonian Princes, or the dethroned giants of the Saturnian reign, to whom Jupiter was but a beardless boy. Black as Erebus, ugly as sin, large, lowering, with tones of thunder, and looks of fire, seared consciences, and death-defying, yet death-expecting attitude, they stand up, filling the eye and the imagination, and their huge forms are never lost sight of for a moment, during the wildest turmoil and blackest tempest of the revolution: civilians both, armed only with the bayonets of their eyes, and the artillery of their eloquence, and therefore to us more interesting than the little bustling, bloody Toulon officer, the "name of whom is Napoleon Buonaparte." Of the two, Carlyle prefers Mirabeau; we, with deference, Danton. Of course, the former filled a much larger space, and played a far more conspicuous part on the stage of

history; but we speak of native manhood and capacity; of what Danton was and might have become. Mirabeau was a count, and had not a little of the old noblesse strut; Danton was of "good farmer people," dug out of the fresh ground, "of the earth earthy." Mirabeau was intensely theatrical, an actor, fond of splendid clap-traps, and too conscious of himself; Danton was an earnest, simple barbarian, a modern Maximin, or Milo, and spoke and acted from the fulness of an honest, though miserably mistaken zeal; Mirabeau was movable by a kiss from female majesty; Danton was a tower, with this inscription, "No weakness:" once, indeed, he accepted a sop from the government, and then "walked on his own way." Mirabeau was a plagiarist, a sublime thief, submitted to be examined, primed, loaded by others; Danton's burning sentences were all his own; no friend could have lent them, any more than a quarry an aerolite. Mirabeau is a splendid charlatan; Danton a noble savage. Both spoke in short and striking sentences; but while Mirabeau's were spirit-stirring and electric, Danton's were terribly sublime. The one on his death-bed, pointing to the sun, could say, "If he be not God, he is his cousin-german," the other, "The coalesced kings threaten us: we hurl at them, in gage of battle, the head of a king." Mirabeau was perpetually protruding himself upon public notice. Danton was a "large nature that could rest;" he sat silent in his place on the mountain for weeks, till a case of real emergency occurred, till his country was in danger; and then rose up, uttered from his lion throat a few strong words, and sat down again; his country safe, himself silent as before. The vices of both, like their powers, were gigantic. Those of Mirabeau were profligacy and vanity, which marked him out amid the vainest and most dissolute nation on the face of the earth. Danton's were a lust for gold, and an indifference to blood. Mirabeau died of the consequences of his dissipation. Danton had a grander death, and never did the guillotine shear off a stronger head. Is it fanciful to call the one the Byron, and the other the Burns of the period?

We cannot get out of our mind that last visit of Danton to his native village. We see him visiting, for the last time, Arcis sur Aube, the spot where his mother bore him, "for he, too, had a mother, and lay warm in his cradle like the rest of us"—where his vast form grew up, and the wild dream of liberty first crossed his daring soul. We see him straying along his native stream, in "haunts which knew him when a boy;" leaning down his

Herculean stature upon its bank; the stream the while mirroring his black locks and moody brow; "silent, the great Titan! and wondering what the end of these things will be;" musing upon the bloody past, and looking forward gloomily to the future, and starting up suddenly with fierce energy and tempestuous resolve, as some wandering wind appears to whisper, "Robespierre!" or as to his awakened fears the guillotine seems to glass itself in the passing waters. And with beating heart we follow him from this to the tribunal of Fouquier, and tremble as he gives in his address, "My name is Danton! a name tolerably well known in the revolution. My dwelling shall soon be with annihilation, but I shall live in the Pantheon of history;" or as we hear his voice for the last time reverberating from the domes, in "words piercing from their wild sincerity, winged with wrath, fire flashing from the eyes of him, piercing to all republican hearts, higher and higher till the lion voice of him dies away in his throat;" or as we follow him to the guillotine, "carrying a high look in the death-cart"—saying to Camille Desmoulins as he struggles and writhes, "Courage, my friend, heed not that vile canaille"—to himself, "Oh, my dear wife, shall I never see thee more, then! but, Danton, no weakness"—to the executioner, "Thou wilt show my head to the people—it is worth showing." Surely this man had in him the elements of a noble being, and, had he lived, would, as effectually as even Napoleon, have backed and bridled the Bucephalus of the revolution. "Thus passes, like a gigantic mass of valour, fury, ostentation, and wild revolutionary manhood, this Danton to his unknown home. He had many sins, but one worst sin he had not, that of cant. No hollow formalist, but a very man—with all his dross he was a man—fiery-real, from the great fire-bosom of Nature herself. He saved France from Brunswick—he walked straight his own wild road, whither it led him. He may live for some generations in the memory of men."

The Edinburgh reviewer seems to have a strong liking for Robespierre, and takes our author to task for his treatment of that "sea green incorruptible." This liking on the part of the reviewer seems to us affected as well as absurd. He grounds it upon the fact that he was incorruptible, and was a worshipper after a fashion of his own. Two pitiful pillars for bolstering up a character bowed down by the weight of Danton's blood, by the execrations of humanity, by the unanimous voice of female France, re-echoing the woman's wild cry, "Go down to hell with the curses of all wives and mothers." But, oh! he was above

a bribe! Nay, he was only beneath it; and so is a hyena. He died a poor man; but so far from making him an Andrew Marvel therefore, let us rather say with Hall, that "ambition in his mind had, like Aaron's rod, swallowed up the whole fry of petty propensities;" and that there are "other virtues besides that of dying poor." Miserable counterbalance! incorruptibility against treachery, ingratitude, infernal cruelty, and systematic hypocrisy—one virtue to a thousand crimes. But he was a worshipper, it seems. Of what? Of Wisdom in the shape of a smoked statue! And this most ridiculous and monstrous of all farces ever enacted in this world—this tom-foolery of hell, with its ghastly ceremonies and ghastlier high-priest, "in sky-blue coat and black breeches," decreeing the existence of a Supreme Being with one foot in Danton's blood, and the immortality of the soul with another on the brink of ruin—this cowardly acknowledgment, more horrible than the blasphemous denial—this patronage of Deity by one of the worst and meanest of his creatures—has at length met with an admirer in the shape of a contributor to *The Edinburgh Review!* "O shame, where is thy blush?" But he had a party who died with him, while Danton stood almost alone. Why, Nero had his friends. "Some hand unseen strewed flowers upon his tomb." The brood of a tiger probably regard their parent as an amiable character, much mis-represented. Satan has his party. Can we wonder, then, that a set of miscreants, driven to desperation, should cling to each other, and to the greatest villain of their number? And as to Danton, not only had he, too, his devoted adherents, Camille Desmoulins, Herault de Sechelles, etc., but the galleries had nearly rushed down and rescued him. His fall secured Robespierre's ruin; and when the wretch attempted to speak in his own behalf, what cry rung in his ears, telling how deeply the people had felt and mourned their Titan's death? "Danton's blood chokes him."

We noticed, too, and wondered at his epithets, and the curious art he has of compounding and recompounding them, till the resources of style stagger, and the reader's eye, familiarised to the ordered and measured tameness of the common run of writers, becomes dim with astonishment. Take some specimens which occur on opening the book:—"Fountain-ocean, flame-image, star-galaxies, sharp-bustling, kind-sparkling, Tantalus-Ixion, Amazonian-graceful, bushy-whiskered, fire-radiant, high-pendant, self-distractive, land-surging, waste-flashing, honour-worthy, famous-infamous, real-imaginary, pale-dim."

Such are a few, and but a few, of the strange, half-mad, contradictory and chaotic epithets, which furnish a barbaric garnish to the feast which Carlyle has spread before us. Whether in these he had Homer in his eye, or whether he has rather imitated his hero Mirabeau, who, we know, was very fond of such combinations as Grandison-Cromwell, Crispin-Cataline, etc., we cannot tell; but, while questioning their taste, we honestly admit that we love the book all the better for them, and would miss them much were they away. To such faults (as men to the taste of tobacco) we not only become reconciled, for the sake of the pleasure connected with them, but we learn positively to love what seemed at first to breathe the very nausea of affectation. It is just as when you have formed a friendship for a man, you love him all the better for his oddities, and value as parts of him all his singularities, from the twist in his temper and the crack in his brain, to the cast in his eye and the stutter in his speech. So, Carlyle's epithets are not beautiful, but they are his.

We noticed, too, his passion for the personal. His ideas of all his characters are connected with vivid images of their personal appearance. He is not like Grant, of the *Random Recollections*, whose soul is swallowed up in the minutiæ of dress, and whose "talk is of" buttons. Carlyle is infinitely above this. But in the strength of his imagination, and the profound philosophical conviction, that nature has written her idea of character and intellect upon countenance and person, and that "faces never lie," he avails himself of all the traditionary and historical notices which he can collect; and the result is the addition of the charms of painting to those of history. His book will never need an illustrated edition. It is illustrated beforehand, in his graphic and perpetually repeated pictures. Mirabeau lifts up, on his canvas, his black boar's head, and carbuncled and grim-pitted visage, like "a tiger that had had the small-pox." Robespierre shows his sea-green countenance and bilious eyne, through spectacles, and, ere his fall, is "seen wandering in the fields with an intensely meditative air, and eyes blood-spotted, fruit of extreme bile." Danton strides along heavily, as if shod with thunder, shaking, above his mighty stature, profuse and "coal-black" locks, and speaking as with a cataract in his throat. Marat croaks hoarse, with "bleared soul, looking through bleared, dull, acrid, woe-struck face," "redolent of soot and horse-drugs." Camille Desmoulins stalks on with "long curling locks, and face of dingy black-

guardism, wondrously irradiated with genius, as if a naphtha lamp burnt within it." Abbé Sieyes, a "light, thin" man, "elastic, wiry," weaves his everlasting constitutions of still flimsier materials than himself. Bailly "trembles under the guillotine with cold." Vergniaud, during his last night in prison, sings "tumultuous songs." Gross David shows his "swoln cheek," type of genius, in a "state of convulsion." Charlotte Corday hies to Paris, a "stately Norman figure, with beautiful still countenance." Louis stands on the edge of the scaffold, speaking in dumb show, his "face very red." Marie Antoinette, Theresa's daughter, skims along, touching not the ground, till she drops down on it a corpse. Madame Theroigne flutters about, a "brown-locked figure," that might win laughter from the grim guillotine itself. Barbaroux, "beautiful as Antinous," "looks into Madame Roland's eyes, and in silence, in tragical renunciance, feels that she is all too lovely." And last, not least, stands at the foot of the scaffold Madame Roland herself, "a noble white vision, with high queenly face, soft proud eyes, and long black hair flowing down to her girdle." Thus do all Carlyle's characters live and move; no stuffed figures, or breathing corpses, but animated and flesh and blood humanities. And it is this intense love of the picturesque and personal which gives such a deep and dramatic interest to the book, and makes it above all comparison the most lively and eloquent history of the period which has appeared.

We might have dwelt, too, on the sardonic air which pervades the greater part of it. Carlyle's sarcasm is quite peculiar to himself. It is like that of an intelligence who has the power of viewing a great many grave matters at a strange sinister angle, which turns them into figures of mirth. He does not, indeed, resemble the author of *Don Juan*, who describes the horrors of a shipwreck like a demon who had, invisible, sat amid the shrouds, choked with laughter;—with immeasurable glee had heard the wild farewell rising from sea to sky;—had leaped into the long boat, as it put off with its pale crew;—had gloated over the cannibal repast;—had leered, unseen, into the "dim eyes of those shipwrecked men," and, with a loud and savage burst of derision, had seen them, at length, sinking into the waves. Carlyle's laughter is not that of a fiend, but of a water kelpie, —wild, unearthly, but with a certain sympathy and sorrow shuddering down the wind on it as it dies away. More truly than Byron might he say, "And if I laugh at any mortal thing, 'tis that I may not weep." For our parts, we love to see this

great spirit, as he stands beside the boiling abyss of the French Revolution, not, like many, raving in sympathy; nor, like others, coolly sounding the tumultuous surge; nor, like others, vituperating the wild waters; but veiling the profoundest pity, love, terror, and wonder in inextinguishable peals of laughter. This laughter may be hearty, but assuredly it is not heartless.

We remarked, in fine, its singular compression of events, scarce one prominent point in the whole complicated history being omitted;—the art he has of stripping off the prude flesh, and giving the lion's marrow of history;—his want of prejudice, and bias, producing, on the one hand, in him, a perfect and ideal impartiality, and, on the other, in you, an unsatisfied and tantalised feeling, which prompts you to ask, "What, after all, does this man want us to think of the French Revolution,—to love or to hate, to bless or to ban it?"—the appositeness and point of his quotations, which, like strong tributaries, mingle congenially with the main current of his narrative, and are drawn from remote and recondite regions;—and his habitual use of the present tense, thus completing the epic cast of his work, giving a freshness and startling life to its every page, and producing an effect as different from the tame *past* of other writers, as the smoothed locks of a coxcomb are from the roused hair of a Moenad or an Apollo standing bright in the breath of Olympus.

Such is our estimate of a book which, though no model in style, nor yet a final and conclusive history of the period, can never, as long as originality, power, and genius are admired, pass from the memories of men. We trust we shall live to see its grand sequel in the shape of a life of Napoleon, from the same pen. May it be worthy of the subject and the author, and come forth in the fine words of Symmons:—

> Thundering the moral of his story,
> And rolling boundless as his glory.

Thomas Carlyle was born at Ecclefechan, Annandale. His parents were "good farmer people," his father an elder in the Secession church there, and a man of strong native sense, whose words were said to "nail a subject to the wall." His excellent mother still lives, and we had the pleasure of meeting her lately in the company of her illustrious son; and beautiful it was to see his profound and tender regard, and her motherly and yearning reverence,—to hear her fine old covenanting accents, concerting with his transcendental tones. He studied in Edinburgh. Previous to this, he had become intimate with Edward

Irving, an intimacy which continued unimpaired to the close of the latter's eccentric career. Like most Scottish students, he had many struggles to encounter in the course of his education; and had, we believe, to support himself by private tuition, translations for the booksellers, etc. The day star of German literature arose early in his soul, and has been his guide and genius ever since. He entered into a correspondence with Goethe, which lasted, at intervals, till the latter's death. Yet he has never, we understand, visited Germany. He was, originally, destined for the church. At one period he taught an academy in Dysart, at the same time that Irving was teaching in Kirkcaldy. After his marriage, he resided partly at Comely Bank, Edinburgh; and, for a year or two in Craigenputtock, a wild and solitary farm house in the upper part of Dumfriesshire. Here, however, far from society, save that of the "great dumb monsters of mountains," he wearied out his very heart. A ludicrous story is told of Lord Jeffrey visiting him in this out-of-the-way region, when they were unapprised of his coming—had nothing in the house fit for the palate of the critic, and had, in dire haste and pother, to send off for the wherewithal to a market town about fifteen miles off. Here, too, as we may see hereafter, Emerson, on his way home from Italy, dropped in like a spirit, spent precisely twenty-four hours, and then "forth uprose that lone wayfaring man," to return to his native woods. He has, for several years of late, resided in Chelsea, London, where he lives in a plain simple fashion; occasionally, but seldom, appearing at the splendid soirées of Lady Blessington, but listened to, when he goes, as an oracle; receiving, at his tea-table, visitors from every part of the world; forming an amicable centre for men of the most opposite opinions and professions, poets and preachers, Pantheists and Puritans, Tennysons and Scotts, Cavanaighs and Erskines, Sterlings and Robertsons, smoking his perpetual pipe, and pouring out, in copious stream, his rich and quaint philosophy. His appearance is fine, without being ostentatiously singular;—his hair dark,—his brow marked, though neither very broad nor very lofty,—his cheek tinged with a healthy red,—his eye, the truest index of his genius, flashing out, at times, a wild and mystic fire from its dark and quiet surface. He is above the middle size, stoops slightly, dresses carefully, but without any approach to foppery. His address, somewhat high and distant at first, softens into simplicity and cordial kindness. His conversation is abundant, inartificial, flowing on, and warbling as it flows,

more practical than you would expect from the cast of his writings,—picturesque and graphic in a high measure,—full of the results of extensive and minute observation, often terribly direct and strong, garnished with French and German phrase, rendered racy by the accompaniment of the purest Annandale accent, and coming to its climaxes, ever and anon, in long, deep, chest-shaking bursts of laughter.

Altogether, in an age of singularities, Thomas Carlyle stands peculiarly alone. Generally known, and warmly appreciated, he has of late become—popular, in the strict sense, he is not, and may never be. His works may never climb the family library, nor his name become a household word; but while the Thomsons and the Campbells shed their gentle genius, like light, into the hall and the hovel,—the shop of the artisan and the sheiling of the shepherd, Carlyle, like the Landors and Lambs of this age, and the Brownes and Burtons of a past, will exert a more limited but profounder power,—cast a dimmer but more gorgeous radiance,—attract fewer but more devoted admirers, and obtain an equal, and perhaps more enviable immortality.

GEORGE CRABBE[1]

To be the poet of the waste places of Creation—to adopt the orphans of the mighty mother—to wed her dowerless daughters—to find out the beauty which has been spilt in tiny drops in her more unlovely regions—to echo the low music which arises from even her stillest and most sterile spots—was the mission of Crabbe, as a descriptive poet. He preferred the Leahs to the Rachels of nature: and this he did not merely that his lot had cast him amid such scenes, and that early associations had taught him a profound interest in them, but apparently from native taste. He actually loved that beauty which stands shivering on the brink of barrenness—loved it for its timidity and its loneliness. Nay, he seemed to love barrenness itself; brooding over its dull page till there arose from it a strange lustre, which his eye distinctly sees, and which in part he makes visible to his readers. It was even as the darkness of cells has been sometimes peopled to the view of the solitary prisoner, and spiders seemed angels in the depths of his dungeon. We can fancy, too, in Crabbe's mind, a feeling of pity for those unloved spots, and those neglected glories. We can fancy him saying, "Let the gay and the aspiring mate with nature in her towering altitudes, and flatter her more favoured scenes; I will go after her into her secret retirements, bring out her bashful beauties, praise what none are willing to praise, and love what there are few to love." From his early circumstances, besides, there had stolen over his soul a shade of settled though subdued gloom. And for sympathy with this, he betook himself to the sterner and sadder aspects of nature, where he saw, or seemed to see, his own feelings reflected, as in a sea of melancholy faces, in dull skies, waste moorlands, the low beach, and the moaning of the waves upon it, as if weary of their eternal wanderings. Such, too, at moments, was the feeling of Burns, when he strode on the scaur of the Nith, and saw the waters red and turbid below; or walked in a windy day by the side of a plantation, and heard the "sound of a going" upon the tops of the

[1] From *A Second Gallery of Literary Portraits*, 1850.

trees; or when he exclaimed, with a calm simplicity of bitterness which is most affecting—

> The leafless trees my fancy please,
> Their fate resembles mine.

Oh! where, indeed, can the unhappy repair, to escape from their own sorrows, or worse, from the unthinking glee or constitutional cheerfulness of others, more fitly than into the wastes and naked places of nature? She will not then and there seem to insult them with her laughing luxuriance—her foliage fluttering, as if in vain display, with the glossy gilding of her flowers, or the sunny sparkle and song of her streamlets. But she will uplift a mightier and older voice. She will soothe them by a sterner ministry. She will teach them "old truths, abysmal truths, awful truths." She will answer their sighs by the groans of the creation travailing in pain; suck up their tears in the sweat of her great agonies; reflect their tiny wrinkles in those deep stabs and scars on her forehead, which speak of struggle and contest; give back the gloom of their brows in the frowns of her forests, her mountain solitudes, and her waste midnight darkness; infuse something, too, of her own sublime expectancy into her spirits; and dismiss them from her society, it may be sadder, but certainly wiser men. How admirably is nature suited to all moods of all men! In spring, she is gay with the light-hearted; in summer, gorgeous as its sun to those fiery spirits who seem made for a warmer day; in autumn, she spreads over all hearts a mellow and unearthly joy; and even in winter—when her temple is deserted of the frivolous and the timid, who quit it along with the smile of the sun—she attracts her own few but faithful votaries, who love her in her naked sculpture, as well as in her glowing pictorial hues, and who enjoy her solemn communion none the less that they enjoy it by themselves. To use the words of a forgotten poet, addressing spring—

> Thou op'st a storehouse for all hues of men.
> To hardihood thou, blustering from the north,
> Roll'st dark—hast sighs for them that would complain;
> Sharp winds to clear the head of wit and worth;
> And melody for those that follow mirth;
> Clouds for the gloomy; tears for those that weep;
> Flowers blighted in the bud for those that birth
> Untimely sorrow o'er; and skies where sweep
> Fleets of a thousand sail for them that plough the deep.

Crabbe, as a descriptive poet, differs from other modern

masters of the art, alike in his selection of subjects, and in his mode of treating the subjects he does select. Byron moves over nature with a fastidious and aristocratic step—touching only upon objects already interesting or ennobled, upon battle fields, castellated ruins, Italian palaces, or Alpine peaks. This, at least, is true of his "Childe Harold," and his earlier pieces. In the later productions of his pen, he goes to the opposite extreme, and alights, with a daring yet dainty foot, upon all shunned and forbidden things—reminds us of the raven in the Deluge, which found rest for the sole of her foot upon carcasses, where the dove durst not stand—rushes in where modesty and reserve alike have forbidden entrance—and ventures, though still not like a lost archangel, to tread the burning marl of hell, the dim gulf of Hades, the shadowy ruins of the pre-Adamitic world, and the crystal pavement of heaven. Moore practises a principle of more delicate selection, resembling some nice fly which should alight only upon flowers, whether natural or artificial, if so that flowers they seem to be; thus, from sunny bowers, and moonlit roses, and gardens, and blushing skies, and ladies' dresses, does the Bard of Erin extract his finest poetry. Shelley and Coleridge attach themselves almost exclusively to the great—understanding this term in a wide sense, as including much that is grotesque and much that is homely, which the magic of their genius sublimates to a proper pitch of keeping with the rest. Their usual walk is swelling and buskined: their common talk is of great rivers, great forests, great seas, great continents: or else of comets, suns, constellations, and firmaments—as that of all half-mad, wholly miserable, and opium-fed genius is apt to be. Sir Walter Scott, who seldom grappled with the gloomier and grander features of his country's scenery (did he ever describe Glencoe or Foyers, or the wildernesses around Ben-mac-Dhui?), had (need we say?) the most exquisite eye for all picturesque and romantic aspects, in sea, shore, or sky; and in the quick perception of this element of the picturesque lay his principal, if not only descriptive power. Wordsworth, again, seems always to be standing above, though not stooping over, the objects he describes. He seldom looks up in wrapt admiration of what is above him; the bending furze-bush and the lowly broom—the nest lying in the level clover-field—the tarn sinking away seemingly before his eye into darker depths—the prospect from the mountain summit cast far beneath him: at highest, the star burning low upon the mountain's ridge, like an "untended watchfire:" these are

the objects which he loves to describe, and these may stand as emblems of his lowly yet aspiring genius—Crabbe, on the other hand, "stoops to conquer"—nay, goes down on his knees, that he may more accurately describe such objects as the marsh given over to desolation from immemorial time—the slush left by the sea, and revealing the dead body of the suicide—the bare crag and the stunted tree, diversifying the scenery of the saline wilderness—the house on the heath, creaking in the storm, and telling strange stories of misery and crime—the pine in some wintry wood, which had acted as the gallows of some miserable man—the gorse surrounding with yellow light the encampment of the gipsies—the few timid flowers, or "weeds of glorious feature," which adorn the brink of ocean—the snow putting out the fire of the pauper, or lying unmelted on his pillow of death—the web of the spider blinding the cottager's window—the wheel turned by the meagre hand of contented or cursing penury—the cards trembling in the grasp of the desperate debauchee—the day stocking forming the cap by night, and the *garter at midnight*—the dunghill becoming the accidental grave of the drunkard—the poor-house of forty years ago, with its patched windows, its dirty environs, its moist and miserable walls, its inmates all snuff, and selfishness, and sin—the receptacle of the outlawed members of English society (how different from "Poosie Nancy's!"), with its gin-gendered quarrels, its appalling blasphemies, its deep debauches, its ferocity without fun, its huddled murders, and its shrieks of disease dumb in the uproar around—the Bedlam of forty years ago, with its straw on end under the restlessness of the insane; its music of groans, and shrieks and mutterings of still more melancholy meaning; its keepers cold and stern, as the snow-covered cliffs above the wintry cataract; its songs dying away in despairing gurgles down the miserable throat; its cells how devoid of monastic silence; its "confusion worse confounded," of gibbering idiocy, monomania absorbed and absent from itself as well as from the world, and howling frenzy; its daylight saddened as it shines into the dim, vacant, or glaring eyes of those wretched men: and its moonbeams shedding a more congenial ray upon the solitude, or the sick-bed, or the deathbed of derangement—such familiar faces of want, guilt, and woe—of nakedness, sterility, and shame, does Crabbe delight in showing us; and is, in very truth, "nature's sternest painter, yet the best." In his mode of managing his descriptions, Crabbe is equally peculiar. Objects, in themselves counted commonplace or disgusting, fre-

quently become impressive, and even sublime, when surrounded by interesting circumstances—when shown in the moonlight of memory—when linked to strong passion—or when touched by the ray of imagination. Then, in Emerson's words, even the corpse is found to have added a solemn ornament to the house where it lay. But it is the peculiarity and the daring of this poet, that he often, not always, tries us with truth and nothing but truth, as if to bring the question to an issue—whether, in nature, absolute truth be not essential though severe poetry. On this question, certainly, issue was never so fully joined before. In even Wordsworth's eye there is a misty glimmer of imagination, through which all objects, low as well as high, are seen. Even his "five blue eggs" *gleam* upon him through a light which comes not from themselves—which comes, it may be, from the Great Bear, or Arcturus and his sons. And when he does—as in some of his feebler verses—strive to see out of this medium, he drops his mantle, loses his vision, and describes little better than would his own "Old Cumberland Beggar." Shakspere in his witches' caldron, and Burns in "haly table," are shockingly circumstantial; but the element of imagination creeps in amid all the disgusting details, and the light that never was on sea or shore disdains not to rest on "eye of newt," "toe of frog," "baboon's blood," the garter that strangled the babe, the grey hairs sticking to the haft of the parricidal knife, and all the rest of the fell ingredients; Crabbe, on the other hand, would have described the five blue eggs, and besides, the materials of the nest, and the kind of hedge where it was built, like a bird-nesting schoolboy; but he would never have given the "gleam." He would, as accurately as Hecate, Canidia, or Cuttysark, have given an inventory of the ingredients of the hell-broth, or of the curiosities on the "haly table," had they been presented to his eye: but could not have conceived them, nor would have slipped in that one flashing word, that single cross ray of imagination, which it required to elevate and startle them into high ideal life. And yet in reading his pictures of poor-houses, etc., we are compelled to say, "Well, that is poetry after all, for it is truth; but it is poetry of comparatively a low order—it is the last gasp of the poetic spirit: and, moreover, perfect and matchless as it is in its kind, it is not worthy of the powers of its author, who can, and has, at other times risen into much loftier ground."

We may illustrate still farther what we mean by comparing the different ways in which Crabbe and Foster (certainly a

prose poet) deal with a library. Crabbe describes minutely and successfully the outer features of the volumes, their colours, clasps, the stubborn ridges of their bindings, the illustrations which adorn them, etc., so well that you feel yourself among them, and they become sensible to touch almost as to sight. But there he stops, and sadly fails, we think, in bringing out the living and moral interest which gathers around a multitude of books, or even around a single volume. This Foster has amply done. The speaking silence of a number of books, where, though it were the wide Bodleian or Vatican, not one whisper could be heard, and yet, where, as in an antechamber, so many great spirits are waiting to deliver their messages—their churchyard stillness continuing even when their readers are moving to their pages, in joy or agony, as to the sound of martial instruments—their awaking, as from deep slumber, to speak with miraculous organ, like the shell which has only to be lifted, and "pleased it remembers its august abodes, and murmurs as the ocean murmurs there"—their power of drawing tears, kindling blushes, awakening laughter, calming or quickening the motions of the life's blood, lulling to repose, or rousing to restlessness, often giving life to the soul, and sometimes giving death to the body—the meaning which radiates from their quiet countenances—the tale of shame or glory which their title pages tell—the memories suggested by the character of their authors, and of the readers who have throughout successive centuries perused them—the thrilling thoughts excited by the sight of names and notes inscribed on their margins or blank pages by hands long since mouldered in the dust, or by those dear to us as our life's blood, who had been snatched from our sides—the aspects of gaiety or of gloom connected with the bindings and the age of volumes—the effects of sunshine playing as if on a congregation of happy faces, making the duskiest shine, and the gloomiest be glad—or of shadow suffusing a sombre air over all—the joy of the proprietor of a large library who feels that Nebuchadnezzar watching great Babylon, or Napoleon reviewing his legions, will not stand comparison with himself seated amid the broad maps, and rich prints, and numerous volumes which his wealth has enabled him to collect and his wisdom entitled him to enjoy—all such hieroglyphics of interest and meaning has Foster included and interpreted in one gloomy but noble meditation, and his introduction to Doddridge is the true "Poem on the Library."

In Crabbe's descriptions the great want is of selection. He

writes inventories. He describes all that his eye sees with cold, stern, lingering accuracy—he marks down all the items of wretchedness, poverty, and vulgar sin—counts the rags of the mendicant—and, as Hazlitt has it, describes a cottage like one who has entered it to distrain for rent. His copies, consequently, would be as displeasing as their originals, were it not that imagination is so much less vivid than eyesight, that we can endure in picture what we cannot in reality, and that our own minds, while reading, can cast that softening and ideal veil over disgusting objects which the poet himself has not sought, or has failed to do. Just as, in viewing even the actual scene, we might have seen it through the medium of imaginative illusion, so the same medium will more probably invest, and beautify its transcript in the pages of the poet.

As a moral poet and sketcher of men, Crabbe is characterised by a similar choice of subject and the same stern fidelity. The mingled yarn of man's everyday life—the plain homely virtues, or the robust and burly vices of Englishmen—the quiet tears which fall on humble beds—the passions which flame up in lowly bosoms—the *amari aliquid*, the deep and permanent bitterness which lies at the heart of the down-trodden English poor—the comedies and tragedies of the fireside—the lover's quarrels—the unhappy marriages—the vicissitudes of common fortunes—the early death—the odd characters—the lingering superstitions—all the elements, in short, which make up the simple annals of lowly or middling society, are the materials of this poet's song. Had he been a Scottish clergyman we should have said that he had versified his Session-book; and certainly many curious chapters of human life might be derived from such a document, and much light cast upon the devious windings and desperate wickedness of the heart, as well as upon that inextinguishable instinct of good which resides in it. Crabbe, perhaps, has confined himself too exclusively to this circle of common things which he found lying around him. He has seldom burst its confines, and touched the loftier themes, and snatched the higher laurels which were also within his reach. He has contented himself with being a Lillo (with occasional touches of Shakspere) instead of something far greater. He has, however, in spite of this self-injustice, effected much. He has proved that a poet, who looks resolutely around him—who stays at home—who draws the realities which are near him, instead of the phantoms that are afar—who feels and records the passion and poetry of his daily life—may found a firm and enduring reputa-

tion. With the dubious exception of Cowper, no one has made out this point so effectually as Crabbe.

And in his mode of treating such themes, what strikes us first is his perfect coolness. Few poets have reached that calm of his which reminds us of Nature's own great quiet eye, looking down upon her monstrous births, her strange anomalies, and her more ungainly forms. Thus Crabbe sees the loathsome, and does not loathe—handles the horrible, and shudders not—feels with firm fingers the palpitating pulse of the infanticide or the murderer—and snuffs a certain sweet odour in the evil savours of putrefying misery and crime. This delight, however, is not an inhuman, but entirely an artistic delight—perhaps, indeed, springing from the very strength and width of his sympathies. We admire as well as wonder at that almost *asbestos* quality of his mind, through which he retains his composure and critical circumspection so cool amid the conflagrations of passionate subjects, which might have burned others to ashes. Few, indeed, can walk through such fiery furnaces unscathed. But Crabbe—what an admirable physician had he made to a lunatic asylum! How severely would he have sifted out every grain of poetry from those tumultuous exposures of the human mind! What clean breasts had he forced the patients to make! What tales had he wrung out from them, to which Lewis's tales of terror were feeble and trite! How he would have commanded them, by his mild, steady, and piercing eye! And yet how calm would his brain have remained, when others, even of a more prosaic mould, were reeling in sympathy with the surrounding delirium! It were, indeed, worth while inquiring how much of this coolness resulted from Crabbe's early practice as a surgeon. That combination of warm inward sympathy and outward phlegm—of impulsive benevolence and mechanical activity—of heart all fire and manner all ice—which distinguishes his poetry, is very characteristic of the medical profession.

In correspondence with this, Crabbe generally leans to the darker side of things. This, perhaps, accounts for his favour in the sight of Byron, who saw his own eagle-eyed fury at man corroborated by Crabbe's stern and near-sighted vision. And it was accounted for partly by Crabbe's early profession, partly by his early circumstances, and partly by the clerical office he assumed. Nothing so tends to sour us with mankind as a general refusal on their part to give us bread. How can a man love a race which seems combined to starve him? This misanthropical influence Crabbe did not entirely escape. As a medical man,

too, he had come in contact with little else than human miseries and diseases; and as a clergyman, he had occasion to see much sin and sorrow; and these, combining with the melancholy incidental to the poetic temperament, materially discoloured his view of life. He became a searcher of dark—of the darkest bosoms; and we see him sitting in the gloom of the hearts of thieves, murderers, and maniacs, and watching the remorse, rancour, fury, dull disgust, ungratified appetite, and ferocious or stupefied despair, which are their inmates. And even when he pictures livelier scenes and happier characters, there steals over them a shade of sadness, reflected from his favourite subjects, as a dark, sinister countenance in a room will throw a gloom over many happy and beautiful faces beside it.

In his pictures of life, we find an unfrequent but true pathos. This is not often, however, of the profoundest or most heart-rending kind. The grief he paints is not that which refuses to be comforted—whose expressions, like Agamemnon's face, must be veiled—which dilates almost to despair, and complains almost to blasphemy—and which, when it looks to heaven, it is

> With that frantic air,
> Which seems to ask if a God be there.

Crabbe's, as exhibited in *Phœbe Dawson*, and other of his tales, is gentle, submissive; and its pathetic effects are produced by the simple recital of circumstances which might and often have occurred. It reminds us of the pathos of *Rosamund Gray*, that beautiful story of Lamb's, of which we once, we regret to say, presumptuously pronounced an unfavourable opinion, but which has since commended itself to our heart of hearts, and compelled that tribute in tears which we had denied it in words. Hazlitt is totally wrong when he says that Crabbe carves a tear to the life in marble, as if his pathos were hard and cold. Be it the statuary of woe—has it, consequently, no truth or power? Have the chiselled tears of the Niobe never awakened other tears, fresh and burning, from their fountain? Horace's *vis me flere*, etc., is not always a true principle. As the wit, who laughs not himself, often excites most laughter in others, so the calm recital of an affecting narrative acts as the meek rod of Moses applied to the rock, and is answered in gushing torrents. You close Crabbe's tale of grief, almost ashamed that you have left so quiet a thing pointed and starred with tears. His pages, while sometimes wet with pathos, are never moist with humour. His satire is often pointed with wit, and sometimes irritates into

invective; but of that glad, genial, and bright-eyed thing we call humour (how well *named*, in its oily softness and gentle glitter!) he has little or none. Compare, in order to see this, his *Borough* with the *Annals of the Parish*. How dry, though powerful, the one; how sappy the other! How profound the one; how pawky the other! Crabbe goes through his Borough, like a scavenger with a rough, stark, and stiff besom, sweeping up all the filth: Galt, like a knowing watchman of the old school —a *canny Charlie*—keeping a sharp look-out, but not averse to a sly joke, and having an eye to the humours as well as misdemeanours of the streets. Even his wit is not of the finest grain. It deals too much in verbal quibbles, puns, and antitheses with their points broken off. His puns are neither good nor bad—the most fatal and anti-ideal description of a pun that can be given. His quibbles are good enough to have excited the laugh of his curate, or gardener; but he forgets that the public is not so indulgent. And though often treading in Pope's track, he wants entirely those touches of satire, at once the lightest and the most withering, as if dropped from the fingers of a malignant fairy—those faint whispers of poetic perdition—those drops of concentrated bitterness—those fatal bodkin-stabs—and those invectives, glittering all over with the polish of profound malignity—which are Pope's glory as a writer, and his shame as a man.

We have repeatedly expressed our opinion, that in Crabbe there lay a higher power than he often exerted. We find evidence of this in his *Hall of Justice* and his *Eustace Grey*. In these he is fairly in earnest. No longer dozing by his parlour fire over the "*Newspaper*," or napping in a corner of his "Library," or peeping in through the windows of the "Workhouse," or recording the select scandal of the "Borough," he is away out into the wide and open fields of highest passion and imagination. What a tale that *Hall of Justice* hears—to be paralleled only in the *Thousand and One Nights of the Halls of Eblis!*—a tale of misery, rape, murder, and furious despair; told, too, in language of such lurid fire as has been seen to shine o'er the graves of the dead! But, in *Eustace Grey*, our author's genius reaches its climax. Never was madness—in its misery —its remorse—the dark companions, "the ill-favoured ones," who cling to it in its wild way and will not let it go, although it curse them with the eloquence of hell—the visions it sees—the scenery it creates and carries about with it in dreadful keeping—and the language it uses, high, aspiring, but broken

as the wing of a struck eagle—so strongly and meltingly revealed. And, yet, around the dismal tale there hangs the breath of beauty, and, like poor Lear, Sir Eustace goes about crowned with flowers—the flowers of earthly poetry—and a hope which is not of the earth. And, at the close, we feel to the author all that strange gratitude which our souls are constituted to entertain for those who have most powerfully wrung and tortured them.

Would that Crabbe had given us a century of such things. We would have preferred to the *Tales of the Hall*, *Tales of Greyling Hall*, or more tidings from the *Hall of Justice*. It had been a darker Decameron, and brought out more effectually —what the "Village Poorhouse," and the sketches of Elliot have since done—the passions, miseries, crushed aspirations, and latent poetry, which dwell in the hearts of the plundered poor; as well as the wretchedness which, more punctually than their veriest menial, waits often behind the chairs, and hands the silver dishes of the great.

We will not dilate on his other works individually. In glancing back upon them as a whole, we will endeavour to answer the following questions: (1), What was Crabbe's object as a moral poet? (2), How far is he original as an artist? (3), What is his relative position to his great contemporaries? And, (4), what is likely to be his fate with posterity? (1), His object. —The great distinction between man and man, and author and author, is purpose. It is the edge and point of character; it is the stamp on the subscription of genius; it is the direction on the letter of talent. Character without it is blunt and torpid. Talent without it is a letter, which, undirected, goes no whither. Genius without it is bullion, sluggish, splendid, uncirculating. Purpose yearns after and secures artistic culture. It gathers, as by a strong suction, all things which it needs into itself. Crabbe's artistic object is tolerably clear, and has been already indicated. His moral purpose is not quite so apparent. Is it to satirise, or is it to reform vice? Is it pity, or is it contempt, that actuates his song? What are his plans for elevating the lower classes in the scale of society? Has he any, or does he believe in the possibility of their permanent elevation? Such questions are more easily asked than answered. We must say that we have failed to find in him any one overmastering and earnest object, subjugating everything to itself, and producing that unity in all his works which the trunk of a tree gives to its smallest, its remotest, to even its withered leaves. And yet, without apparent intention, Crabbe has done good moral service.

He has shed much light upon the condition of the poor. He has spoken in the name and stead of the poor dumb mouths that could not tell their own sorrows or sufferings to the world. He has opened the mine, which Ebenezer Elliot and others, going to work with a firmer and more resolute purpose, have dug to its depths.

(2), His originality.—This has been questioned by some critics. He has been called a version, in coarse paper and print, of Goldsmith, Pope, and Cowper. His pathos comes from Goldsmith—his wit and satire from Pope—and his minute and literal description from Cowper. If this were true, it were as complimentary to him as his warmest admirer could wish. To combine the characteristic excellences of three true poets is no easy matter. But Crabbe has not combined them. His pathos wants altogether the naiveté of sentiment and *curiosa felicitas* of expression which distinguish Goldsmith's "Deserted Village." He has something of Pope's terseness, but little of his subtlety, finish, or brilliant malice. And the motion of Cowper's mind and style in description differs as much from Crabbe's as the playful leaps and gambols of a kitten from the measured, downright, and indomitable pace of a hound—the one is the easiest, the other the severest, of describers. Resemblances, indeed, of a minor kind are to be found; but still Crabbe is as distinct from Goldsmith, Cowper, and Pope, as Byron from Scott, Wordsworth, and Coleridge.

Originality consists of two kinds—one, the power of inventing new materials; and the other, of dealing with old materials in a new way. We do not decide whether the first of these implies an act of absolute creation; it implies all we can conceive in an act of creative power; from elements bearing to the result the relation which the alphabet does to the *Iliad*—genius brings forth its bright progeny, and we feel it to be new. In this case, you can no more anticipate the effect from the elements than you can, from the knowledge of the letters, anticipate the words which are to be compounded out of them. In the other kind of originality, the materials bear a larger proportion to the result—they form an appreciable quantity in our calculations of what it is to be. They are found for the poet, and all he has to do is, with skill and energy, to construct them. Take, for instance, Shakspere's "Tempest," and Coleridge's *Anciente Marinere*—of what more creative act can we conceive than is exemplified in these? Of course, we have all had beforehand ideas similar to a storm, a desert island, a witch, a magician, a

mariner, a hermit, a wedding-guest; but these are only the alphabet to the spirits of Shakspere and Coleridge. As the sun, from the invisible air, draws up in an instant all pomps of cloudy forms—paradises brighter than Eden, mirrored in waters, which blush and tremble as their reflection falls wooingly upon them—mountains, which seem to bury their snowy or rosy summits in the very heaven of heavens—throne-shaped splendours, worthy of angels to sit on them, flushing and fading in the west—seas of aerial blood and fire—momentary cloud-crowns and golden avenues, stretching away into the azure infinite beyond them;—so, from such stuff as dreams are made of, from the mere empty air, do those wondrous magicians build up their new worlds, where the laws of nature are repealed—where all things are changed without any being confused—where sound becomes dumb and silence eloquent—where the earth is empty, and the sky is peopled—where material beings are invisible, and where spiritual beings become gross and palpable to sense—where the skies are opening to show riches—where the isle is full of noises—where beings proper to this sphere of dream are met so often that you cease to fear them, however odd or monstrous—where magic has power to shut now the eyes of kings and now the great bright eye of ocean—where, at the bidding of the poet, new, complete, beautiful mythologies, at one time sweep across the sea, and anon dance down from the purple and mystic sky—where all things have a charmed life, the listening ground, the populous air, the still or the vexed sea, the human or the imaginary beings—and where, as in deep dreams, the most marvellous incidents are most easily credited, slide on most softly, and seem most native to the place, the circumstances, and the time. "This is creation," we exclaim; nor did Ferdinand seem to Miranda a fresher and braver creature than does to us each strange settler, whom genius has planted upon its own favourite isle. Critics may, indeed, take these imaginary beings—such as Caliban and Ariel—and analyse them into their constituent parts; but there will be some one element which escapes them—laughing, as it leaps away, at their baffled sagacity, and proclaiming the original power of its Creator: as in the chemical analysis of an *aerolite*, amid the mere earthy constituents, there is something which declares its unearthly origin. Take creation as meaning, not so much Deity bringing something out of nothing, as *filling the void with his spirit*, and genius will seem a lower form of the same power.

The other kind of originality is, we think, that of Crabbe.

It is magic at second-hand. He takes, not makes, his materials. He finds a good foundation—wood and stone in plenty—and he begins laboriously, successfully, and after a plan of his own, to build. If in any of his works he approaches to the higher property, it is in *Eustace Grey*, who moves here and there, on his wild wanderings, as if to the rubbing of Aladdin's lamp.

This prepares us for coming to the third question, What is Crabbe's relative position to his great contemporary poets? He belongs to the second class. He is not a philosophic poet, like Wordsworth. He is not, like Shelley, a Vates, moving upon the uncertain but perpetual and furious wind of his inspiration. He is not, like Byron, a demoniac exceeding fierce, and dwelling among the tombs. He is not, like Keats, a sweet and melancholy voice, a tune bodiless, bloodless—dying away upon the waste air, but for ever to be remembered as men remember a melody they have heard in youth. He is not, like Coleridge, all these almost by turns, and, besides, a psalmist, singing at times strains so sublime and holy, that they might seem snatches of the song of Eden's cherubim, or caught in trance from the song of Moses and the Lamb. To this mystic brotherhood Crabbe must not be added. He ranks with a lower but still lofty band—with Scott (as a poet), and Moore, and Hunt, and Campbell, and Rogers, and Bowles, and James Montgomery, and Southey; and surely they nor he need be ashamed of each other, as they shine in one soft and peaceful cluster.

We are often tempted to pity poor posterity on this score. How is it to manage with the immense number of excellent works which this age has bequeathed, and is bequeathing it? How is it to economise its time so as to read a tithe of them? And should it in mere self-defence proceed to decimate, with what principle shall the process be carried on, and who shall be appointed to preside over it? Critics of the twenty-second century, be merciful as well as just. Pity the *disjecta membra* of those we thought mighty poets. Respect and fulfil our prophecies of immortality. If ye must carp and cavil, do not, at least, in mercy, abridge. Spare us the prospect of this last insult, an abridged copy of the *Pleasures of Hope*, or "Don Juan," a *new* abridgment. If ye must operate in this way, be it on *Madoc*, or the *Course of Time*. Generously leave room for *O'Connor's Child* in the poet's corner of a journal, or for *Eustace Grey* in the space of a crown piece. Surely, living in the Millennium, and resting under your vines and fig-trees, you will have more time to read than we, in this bustling age, who move, live

eat, drink, *sleep, and die,* at railway speed. If not, we fear the case of many of our poets is hopeless, and that others, besides the author of *Silent Love* would be wise to enjoy their present laurels, for verily there are none else for them.

Seriously, we hope that much of Crabbe's writing will every year become less and less readable, and less and less easily understood; till, in the milder day, men shall have difficulty in believing that such physical, mental, and moral degradation, as he describes, ever existed in Britain; and till, in future encyclopædias, his name be found recorded as a powerful but barbarous writer, writing in a barbarous age. The like may be the case with many, who have busied themselves more in recalling the past or picturing the present, than in anticipating the future. But there are, or have been among us, a few who have plunged beyond their own period, nay, beyond "all ages" —who have seen and shown us the coming eras:

> As in a cradled Hercules you trace
> The lines of empire in his infant face—

and whose voice must go down, in tones becoming more authoritative as they last, and in volume becoming vaster as they roll, like mighty thunderings and many waters, through the minster of all future time; in lower key, concerting with those more awful voices from within the veil which have already shaken earth, and which, uttered once "more," shall shake not earth only, but also heaven. High destiny! but not his whose portrait we have now drawn.

We have tried to draw his mental, but not his physical likeness. And yet it has all along been blended with our thoughts, like the figure of one known from childhood, like the figure of our own beloved and long-lost father. We see the venerable old man, newly returned from a botanical excursion, laden with flowers and weeds (for no one knew better than he that every weed is a flower—it is the secret of his poetry), with his high narrow forehead, his grey locks, his glancing shoe-buckles, his clean dress somewhat ruffled in the woods, his mild countenance, his simple abstracted air. We, too, become abstracted as we gaze, following in thought the outline of his history—his early struggles—his love—his adventures in London—his journal, where, on the brink of starvation, he wrote the affecting words "*O Sally for you*"—his rescue by Burke—his taking orders—his return to his native place—his mounting the pulpit stairs, not caring what his old enemies thought of him or his sermon—

his marriage—the entry, more melancholy by far than the other, made years after in reference to it, "*yet happiness was denied*" —the publication of his different works—the various charges he occupied—his child-like surprise at getting so much money for *Tales of the Hall*—his visit to Scotland—his mistaking the Highland chiefs for foreigners, and bespeaking them in bad French—his figure as he went, dogged by the *caddie* through the lanes of the auld town of Edinburgh, which he preferred infinitely to the new—the "aul' fule" he made of himself in pursuit of a second wife, etc. etc.; so absent do we become in thinking over all this, that it disturbs his abstraction; he starts, stares, asks us in to his parsonage, and we are about to accept the offer, when we awake, and, lo! it is a dream.

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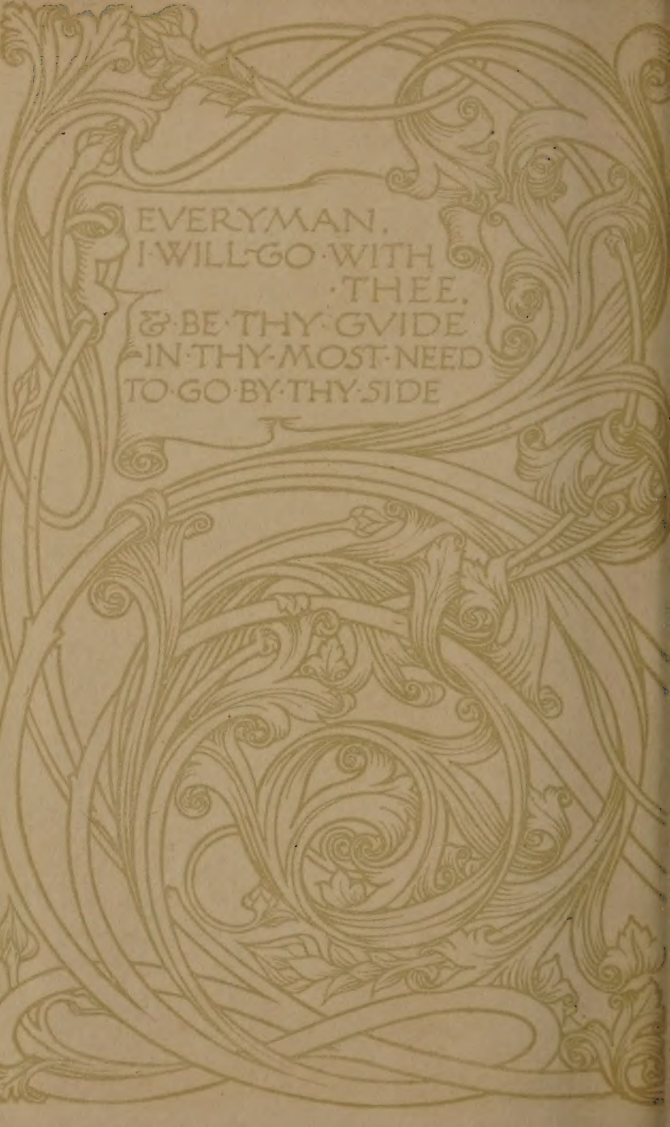
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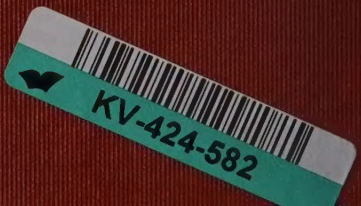
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